

THE BASIS OF FAITH.



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The basis of faith





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THE BASIS OF FAITH.



# THE BASIS OF FAITH.

*A CRITICAL SURVEY*

OF THE

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN THEISM

*THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE*

*FOR 1877.*

BY

EUSTACE R. CONDER, M.A..

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*“ ἡμεῖς προσκυνούμεν ὃ οἶδαμεν.”*

“ WE KNOW WHAT WE WORSHIP.”



## ADVERTISEMENT

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THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE has been established with a view to the promotion of Biblical Science, and Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature.

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## ERRATA

Page 55, line 4.

*For 'forces' read 'forms.'*

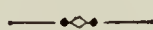
Page 223, line 1.

*For 'proportions' read 'properties.'*

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*For 'Note E' read 'Note F.'*

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<sup>1</sup> As the title of this Lecture has been subjected to some friendly criticism, I may be allowed to explain, that I intend by it such a unity of plan and working as bespeaks the presence and activity of a Master-Builder (*ἀρχιτέκτων*), or Chief Contriver. No other term seems to express this. "Architectural" refers not to the architect, but to the art of building, or to buildings themselves, and is besides not in figurative use (though "architect" is). Politics is called by Aristotle "*the architectonic art*," because it governs and gives unity to all the other arts of life. (See LIDDELL and SCOTT, s.v. *ἀρχιτεκτονικός*.)

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## PREFACE.

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**T**HEOLOGY, wont to be called of yore the Queen of the Sciences, finds her right fiercely challenged not merely to reign, but to exist. Science is proclaimed Empress of Human Thought. We are told that she will not only bow to no superior, but will tolerate no partnership of empire. It is supposed to be by her authority that her heralds and ministers not only seek to dethrone Theology as a pretender, but denounce Theism, the mother of all theologies, as an illusory phantom, meriting speedy banishment to the realm of obsolete spectres and sentimental unrealities.

The object of the following pages is to aid the reader in testing the real value of these portentous assumptions by the twofold method of (1) an examination into the foundations and limits of Human Knowledge, and (2) a review of the evidence for the Belief in the Existence of GOD.

To profess myself satisfied with my execution of this arduous task, would be to pronounce myself incompetent even to estimate it. Thoroughly to discuss the foundations and limits of human knowledge, would be to rewrite Metaphysics; and exhaustively to epitomise the evidence of Theism, would be to compose an encyclopædia of Physics, Biology, and Ethics, and a compend of

History. In order to a complete controversial discussion of these two fields of inquiry, it would be necessary to master a large library and to write a small one. Even if life were not too short and too crowded with other work to attempt this heroic scale of labour, the world is far too busy to attend to such elaborate disquisitions, and the pace of modern thought too rapid to be thus led or arrested. Every hour, for good or for evil, its course receives a new impulse and fresh impetus. It is useless to set the points an hour after the express train has passed. No question more imperiously demands an answer from our reason, or weaves itself more deeply into our daily life, than the inquiry—IS THERE A GOD? Is there an Infinite, All-wise, All-powerful Spirit, the Type of goodness, who has made all, rules all, loves all his creatures, but men as his children? And if there be, does He require and enable men to know, love, trust, and obey Him as their Father? No question of abstract science for truth's sake, or of applied science for the sake of utility and happiness, can compare with this. If therefore I should be deemed presumptuous in attempting a work the adequate performance of which I acknowledge to be beyond my power (as it is perhaps beyond any one's power), my defence is that the condition of a very large proportion of human work is the necessity for doing imperfectly at the moment what will not wait to be perfectly done at leisure. This work presses to be done, and I have done my best.

The kernel and general outline of the present work including a considerable part of the substance of the first four Lectures, was committed to writing some twenty-five years ago. The opinion expressed of that immature fragment, faulty though it was, by my late tutor and



friend, HENRY ROGERS, was one strong encouragement to keep this task in view, and to entertain the hope, when invited to the high honour and heavy responsibility of delivering one course in the series of lectures which Mr. Rogers so nobly opened, that in this direction, if in any, I might render some useful service to the Christian Church and to my generation. A shade of deep and solemn pathos is cast over my finished work, from the fact that he whose favouring criticism was my first encouragement to undertake it, is no longer among us, to bestow upon its completion that generous and kindly welcome which I know he would have warmly rendered.

The spirit proper to this great inquiry seems to me; not that of so-called philosophic impartiality, which when the main interests of human life are in question must denote either insensibility or insincerity; but the severe earnestness of a mind too deeply concerned to allow itself to be imposed upon by fallacious evidence or inconclusive reasoning. In moral and religious questions, a cold-hearted absence of vivid personal interest, far from being a requisite, is a fatal disqualification for judging justly. Even the crooked vision of narrow prejudice and heated imagination is not more disabling than the snow-blindness of moral insensibility. Such minds are not able truly to see moral truth when presented to them, because, as a perfect vibrating medium is indispensable for the ear to judge correctly of harmony and discord, so for the intellect to judge correctly of moral truth, a perfect medium is requisite through which that truth can be apprehended—a moral nature that vibrates promptly and strongly to every tone of duty, admiration, praise, blame, or love. To reason about matters of which emotion is the very essence, in the absence or deliberate

suppression of emotion, is like trying to study the phenomena of life in a dead body.

So much the more, not the less, necessary is it that our reasonings on this foundation-truth of life be regulated and tested by the severest logic. If in any part of the argument I have substituted rhetoric for logic—the robes and weapons of Truth for Truth herself—it is a fault which I should be eager to correct, if fairly convicted of it. Next to truth, the great aims I have kept before me in these Lectures are clearness and fairness.

The title of the original fragment has been retained—*The Basis of Faith*—although in the interim two very able works have been published with similar titles: MR MIALL'S *Bases of Belief*, and MR. MURPHY'S *Scientific Bases of Faith*. The first of these, admirable in its own line, occupies a totally distinct field of thought. The second traverses to a great extent the same ground with the present volume. In some cases, Mr. Murphy's line of thought and my own are remarkably and closely parallel; in others, widely discrepant. In the former case, the agreement between the views of so vigorous and original a thinker and those advanced in the following pages is a strong confirmation of their truth. In the latter, it is possible that Mr. Murphy's views may commend themselves to minds which my own will fail to convince, and lead them—though by what seems to me a slippery and devious path—to the same ultimate resting-place of faith.

Another work of eminent ability, from which I have derived during the preparation of these Lectures the indirect help of intellectual stimulus, is MR. JACKSON'S *Philosophy of Natural Theology*, a work in which the reader is almost bewildered by the redundance of learned

or quaint illustration, and the perpetual divarication of the track of thought; but whose main idea is the central idea likewise of my own work, viz., that the evidence on which religious faith is solidly based is cumulative, combining in one result the totally independent testimony of the World Without and the World Within. But my argument takes a more comprehensive range, including the consideration of Revelation, or the direct manifestation of God to man. For reasons set forth in the first, seventh, and eighth Lectures, I hold it impossible to draw any sharp line of scientific definition, fencing off the province of Natural from that of Revealed Theology. As matter of fact, the faith of the majority of believers in God does largely rest upon the Bible, and especially on the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. In a comprehensive estimate of the evidence, therefore, the testimony of Scripture claims to be as carefully examined as that of the Physical Universe, or that of Man's conscience and moral nature.

It is a question open to debate whether the religious temper of an age most determines or is determined by its prevalent metaphysics. They act and react on one another. But no competent thinker can ignore their close connection; nor is it easy to overrate the importance of dealing with the metaphysical root of scepticism. Nothing is further from my ambition than to frame a metaphysical system, for I believe the love of system to be the snare of philosophers and the ruin of Metaphysics. But I confess that I attach great importance to the views which I have endeavoured (with the utmost attainable brevity) to establish in Lecture IV., and which appear to me, if just, to furnish a new departure in Metaphysics. I had hoped to have included in

the Appendix, as a supplement to Lecture IV., a brief Essay on the Classification of Ideas—one of the chief *desiderata*, as it seems to me, for the reform and advancement of metaphysical science—but time and space (which, whatever they may be to the transcendental philosopher, are very real barriers to the printer and the publisher) have forbidden me to carry out this intention. The argument in Lecture IV., though capable of being greatly enlarged and supplemented, is, I hope, for its present purposes, complete as it stands.

Such as my work is, I am thankful to have been permitted to undertake, and enabled to complete it. I humbly commend it to God, with the prayer that through the illumination of His Spirit it may serve to strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die, and to lead some thoughtful honest seekers after truth out of the bewildering mists of doubt or unbelief into the clear daylight and calm certainty of a mind which has tested the foundations of its faith, and knows it to rest on eternal truth.

EUSTACE R. CONDER.

LEEDS,  
*December, 1877.*

LECTURE I.

*RELIGION.*



## LECTURE I.

### RELIGION.

A TRAVELLER who, in crossing some unexplored desert, should light upon the ruins of an ancient city, the populous abode of a forgotten race, would no sooner recognise the footprints of civilisation than he would look to find those of Religion. Among the mouldering walls of palaces, arsenals, theatres, warehouses, dwellings, he would expect to find the remains of temples. If he discovered none, he would rather infer that the citizens believed in a deity, and practised a worship, requiring no sanctuary, than that they were wholly without creed or worship. He would feel not more sure that they possessed language, laws, and arts than that they possessed some form of Religion. The conviction would be reasonable, for it would be based on universal experience. History proves that the elements of Religion—faith in the Unseen and reverence for the Divine—are inwoven in the very fabric of our nature. Wherever on this wide and wonderful globe man has fixed his dwelling, with the silent stars above his head and the silent graves under his feet, he has set up an altar beside his hearth and consecrated a temple among his sepulchres. Religion has been the sanction of his laws, the cement of his society, the inspiration of his art, the mistress of his deepest emotions, the mainspring of

his most heroic deeds, and even (though so often leagued with tyranny and prejudice) the backbone of his freedom and progress. No empire has widely and permanently ruled him, no civilisation has exalted and enriched him, without the aid of this potent ally. Religion has set its mark on the noblest monuments of his genius and in its highest form has developed in human nature itself a purity, tenderness, force, and majesty else inconceivable.

No philosophy can pretend to give an account of man's nature which ignores this immense and varied evidence, and neglects to consider him as a creature capable of and prone to Religion.

Tribes have been discovered among whom scarce a vestige of religious sentiment could be detected, and all belief in the existence of God had perished. But the very fact that we speak of these unhappy and degraded beings as "discovered" indicates how worthless would be any argument drawn from such anomalies. These detached fragments of the human race, stagnating and putrefying in the isolation into which the tempest of invasion has driven them, or where the tide of receding commerce has left them, are no more to be cited as samples of man's moral and intellectual nature than the tenants of the lazar-house are to be taken as models of his bodily nature. No bounds can be set to the degree in which our nature may become diseased—physically, intellectually, or morally; but a tribe of atheists no more contradicts the assertion that man is essentially religious, than a tribe in which blindness had become hereditary, or in which all knowledge of musical sound had been lost (were such a race of unfortunates discovered), would prove that sight and song are not natural to man and essential to his noblest development.



I may be reminded that I am here assuming the falsity of one of the most favourite of current scientific superstitions, one of the most celebrated and popular of those philosophical romances with which men of science sweeten the severity of logic and bridge the gaps of solid evidence. Religion, according to a widely accepted hypothesis, is natural to man only as a development, not as an original element in his nature. Primitive man, if such a creature can be said to have existed, was destitute even of morality and of reason ; and we must allow that without these he was incapable of religion. Crawling by inconceivably slow degrees from beasthood towards the level of the Bushman or Australian savage ; destined to creep up in adequate millenniums to that of the Negro, the Caffre, the Malay, the Mongol, the Caucasian ; he acquired as he went, with the rudiments of reason and the glimmerings of morality, some germs of fetishistic religion. Through various grades of nature-worship he ascended to polytheism ; thence, by synthesis, abstraction, and imagination, he developed the sublime idea of monotheism, long supposed the culminating point of religious progress. A select company, however, of advanced minds, the philosophical forlorn hope of the race, have crossed the frontier of the new land of promise and worship in the temple of the future. They not only announce, but in their own persons realise, the next great stage of human development, intellectual and religious ; although some centuries or thousands of years must elapse before the bulk of mankind attain the same elevation. With them theism has discharged its function (as fetishism and polytheism in ruder ages and minds) and is obsolete. They are emancipated from the need of a theological morality. They have even dis-

covered that the great fault of religion hitherto has been its irreligiousness ; and that this irreligious impiety consists in the tenacity with which it has clung to the belief in a Supreme Mind, an Infinite Will, ruled by perfect wisdom, love, and justice ; in other words, a personal and righteous God. Banish from men's minds the idea of God and from their breasts the love of God, and you will at least have cleared the foundation for true Religion. What to build there is not as yet unanimously voted. According to one oracle, the Religion of the future is the *cultus* of that Great Being (*Être Suprême*) of which every human being forms part and which each may aid in developing and improving. According to another authority, God is the perfect ideal of which Nature is the imperfect realisation. According to a third, Religion has its essence in the recognition of the Unknowable, and is profaned by the admixture of knowledge, just as science is profaned by the admixture of religion. On two points, however, these varying sects are agreed, that theism, and more especially Christian theism, has come to the end of its reign and nearly played out its *rôle*, and that the Religion of the future (whatever it may be) will be enormously superior both in character and in results. Altruistic brain-instincts, and the organisation of social statics and dynamics, will effect what Christianity has clumsily and vainly attempted by means of love to God, and love to man as the child and image of God.

Meantime it is conceded, and even maintained, that Religion, though so transformed that it is difficult to recognise any feature, is essential to man's highest development.

So far as these views deal with the future it must be left to the future to deal with them. Prophecy admits

no logic but time. So far as they are included in the vaster dream of evolution they will ask our attention further on. So far as they refer to an illimitable and unknowable past, in which prehistoric, or, rather, pre-human, man was ascending from beasthood to barbarism, it is enough for our present argument that Religion is as natural to him as reason and morals, since when incapable of that he was devoid of these also.

Returning from these high speculations to the sober level of fact, and regarding man as we actually know him, we cannot say less than that of all the great forces inspiring and controlling human history, none has been more potent than Religion. Further, it is evident that man possesses faculties or sensibilities which, when evoked by education, prompt him to religious belief, feeling, and conduct. Nor is it un instructive to note that, while the finest and most powerful minds have found in Religion their inspiration and their repose, minds enfeebled by decay, insanity, or even idiocy, often respond to religious impressions when incapable of distinctly retaining any other. As the door of the lowliest cottage and that of the proudest castle alike stand open to the sovereign, so Religion has proved herself equally able to dominate the grandest intellects and to elevate the humblest. It constitutes a centre of equality and sympathy for men of every rank and race, which no other known force can furnish. Gentlest of all influences—for it takes easy and strong hold of childhood—matched in turn with every other principle and passion, Religion has proved alike in action and suffering mightier than all.

Let us now seek to penetrate the secret of these varied and prodigious effects. Let us place ourselves face to face with this mighty and mysterious force. What account

can philosophic analysis give of the elements of Religion and the sources of its power? Is its dominion as legitimate as it is ancient and universal? Is it based on weakness and prejudice, or on nature and truth? Is the awful form of Religion a phantom projected on the misty void by the beholder's eye, or a shadow cast downward by an eternal, divine Reality? Is religious faith a necessity of man's infancy, which he will outgrow; a prejudice of education which science will dispel; or is it a channel of veracious and indispensable knowledge, a condition of our highest development, a link uniting us to a glorious and eternal future?

RELIGION, in the broad sense, I take to signify the sum total of man's belief, emotion, and conduct with respect to GOD. If it be objected that this is not a philosophical definition, I am content that it be accepted as a provisional description, so that we may know what we are talking about. A philosophical definition must be the goal, not the starting-point, of our discussion. If, again, it be objected that this description includes not only theism, polytheism, and pantheism, but atheism, I reply that this is no real objection. The belief that there is no God is as definite a creed as the belief in one God or in many gods. It influences the religious emotions by repressing their exercise. It influences the conduct of life by withdrawing all those motives which depend on belief in a deity. Atheism may be termed negative religion.

The three elements included in this general description of Religion—intellectual, emotional, moral; belief, sentiment, practice—necessarily belong to it in its full development, because they belong to human nature, and together make up our experience. Thought, feeling, will, are the

three strands of the triple cord of life. We have now to ask,—Are all these equally essential to Religion, or in equal proportions? and if not, in which is its most vital and characteristic element to be found?

If, apart from preconceived theory, we seek the answer to this question by setting in array the incongruous and bewildering host of religions extant, or known to have prevailed in the world, we discern amid the confusion and conflict one prominent feature—that of which the Temple, the Altar, the Priest are the standing symbols: WORSHIP. Analyse worship, and detect, if there be one, its law, and you have the key to religion. The mass of contradictory forms seems at first sight to defy scientific generalisation or rational interpretation. Invisible objects of worship range from the Supreme Creator—conceived as infinite in power and wisdom, and purely benevolent,—through innumerable ranks of intelligences, more or less good or evil, to the very Devil—conceived as purely malignant. Visible objects range, in nature, from the blue vault of heaven and the starry orbs to birds, beasts, creeping things, and stones; in art, from the marbles of Phidias and Praxiteles, to the dusty bundles of rags and sticks lately given to the flames in Madagascar. Modes of worship vary from the silent rapture of spiritual adoration to the whirling and muttering of dancing dervishes; from the Lord's Prayer to the whirr of a Tartar prayer-mill; from the low-murmured petition of weeping Hannah or the penitent publican to the stately ritual of a thousand years; from the music of one of Mozart's masses or Luther's chorales to the senseless chant and discordant jangle of cannibals dancing round some hideous fetish. Under the venerable name of Religion we find included the whole range

of human passions and motives, from the purest to the vilest, from adoring love to terror and hatred ; the raptures of saints, the tortures of fakirs, the orgies of bacchanals, the nameless abominations of Syrian and Babylonian idolatry, the all but incredible atrocities of Hindu Thuggism.

Is there a clue to this appalling labyrinth ? There is. One fact at least emerges amid the insane disorder ; one law prevails. This chaos of conflicting worships represents a corresponding chaos of beliefs. The character of any particular worship, and of the sentiments which it expresses, pure or polluted, lofty or degraded, accurately corresponds with the belief entertained regarding the object of worship. CREED—not in the technical sense of a set form of words embodying (or embalming) religious faith, but in its primary sense : what the worshipper believes concerning his deity—is the ruling element in Religion. Illustrations of this universal fact are too abundant to need citing. This is in truth but one sample of the fundamental law of our nature, that our feelings, saving those which spring immediately from sensation, are controlled by our beliefs. Our affections and emotions cannot live in a vacuum ; cannot put forth their strength without an object ; and if no real object presents itself, imagination steps in to fill the office of belief.

Worship, however, while it *implies* belief, apart from which it is but a theatric performance, directly *expresses* sentiment and emotion. It does not follow that creed is the primary, because the controlling, element in Religion. The keynote is one thing ; the dominant which determines the key is another. Which, then, of these two is primary ? Does religious belief give birth to religious feeling, or does religious feeling create its corresponding

object of belief? The answer is that both processes go on together. Worship, the daughter of belief and sentiment, is the most powerful nurse of both. By a like interchange of offices, those sentiments which logically rest on intellectual belief react on the beliefs from which they spring; modify, transform, and even replace them with new forms of belief. A child's instinctive dislike of darkness predisposes him to believe tales of spectres or monsters peopling the darkness. A child of strong fancy and sensitive nerves, however jealously guarded from such ideas, will invent horrors for himself; and, having invented, come firmly to believe in them. The ardent lover, or fond mother, believes the object of enthusiastic affection possessed of a thousand merits which colder eyes fail to discern. Sentiment and imagination combined amply account for any number of such creations as the Oreads, Dryads, and Tritons of Grecian mythology; or the Elves, Dwarfs, Goblins, and Kelpies religiously believed in by our Teutonic and Scandinavian forefathers. The Bacchanal would not have confounded intoxication with inspiration had he not found a base delight in drunken revels; nor the Babylonian have consecrated lewdness if he had loved virtue.

The same principle is seen at work in the influences which, in our day, are transforming Christian theology. Sentiments have come to prevail among the bulk of Christians which render some beliefs, esteemed the very essence of orthodoxy but three generations ago, no longer tenable. Other beliefs are in process of solution, and though their essence may remain undestroyed, they will crystallise in new forms.

Since feeling, although governed by existing belief, possesses this remarkable power of modifying, trans-

forming, and even originating belief, some minds will readily jump to the conclusion (it being the habit of some minds to jump to conclusions) that we need no other account of the origin either of Biblical theism or of any other religious creed than this, that it is the offspring of religious feeling. The instinctive longing of human nature for some object of worship creates, it may be supposed, with the help of imagination, its own deity. Such a conclusion would be superficial and irrational, for, first, it does not follow that, because emotion and affection can create for themselves, through the help of imagination, some unreal objects, therefore all objects of emotion and affection are imaginary. Imagination is amply competent to create, not only such prismatic shadows of human nature as giants, elves, sea-nymphs, spectres, and the like, but a whole pantheon of such deities as Pallas and Aphrodite, Mars and Mercury. But the idea of an Infinite, Eternal, Almighty Creator, perfectly wise, just, and loving, immeasurably transcends the domain of fancy, and belongs to the province of reason and conscience. Imagination can represent such a Being only by symbols, such as those abundantly used in the Hebrew Scriptures, of the eye, ear, hand, mouth, sword, rod, footsteps of God,—never mistaken (except perhaps by modern critics) for anything but symbols.

Secondly, so far from the religious emotions, even in their highest exaltation and purity, being adequate to the task of originating this idea, no complaint is more common with the most devout persons than that their emotions and affections towards God fall immeasurably below what their reason demands. And the persons who have the strongest religious feelings and the most vivid sense of the presence of God, are by no means



always those whose intellect grasps the idea of God with the greatest clearness and sublimity.

Nothing that has been said implies that human nature possesses any specifically distinct religious emotion. Faith, love, fear, awe, penitence, humility, joy, peace, gratitude, may all in turn be intensely religious; and the first three are often spoken of as equivalent to Religion. The passions of zeal, indignation, contempt, and even hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, have been found in such close association with Religion as to be mistaken for its inspiration if not its essence. Religious feelings differ from other feelings not by their nature but by their object. Their nature varies according as the object of worship is mean or exalted, evil or good, hostile or propitious, impersonal or personal, finite or infinite. The Apostle John and Benedict Spinoza were both intensely religious persons, but it would be difficult to say what their religious feelings had in common. The sense of dependence by some, the sense of responsibility by others, has been deemed the central and distinctive religious sentiment. But each of these may be entertained towards a human being, as by a little child towards its parent, or by the servant of an absolute ruler towards his sovereign; and there are forms of Religion in which they have no place. If we were to single out one emotion as most naturally religious, we might fix on Reverence, especially when joined with that mixture of wonder and fear we term Awe. But the natural expression of reverent awe is silence rather than utterance. Reverence must unite with love, trust, gratitude, joy, and the moral admiration inspired by perfect goodness, to produce the highest ideal of worship, and therefore the most perfect type of religion.

A PRACTICAL element has been included in our definition of Religion. Common usage regards the conduct flowing from religious sentiment and conviction as an inseparable part of Religion. A man is set down as religious or irreligious according to his daily course of life, whatever may be his sentiments. This agrees with the Apostle James's practical description (not intended for a logical definition) of "pure religion and undefiled." If belief is sincere and feeling intense, they must rule conduct. It is, however, only a question of the use of the term, not of the nature of the thing, whether we consider Religion as including all three elements; or, restricting it to the first and second, say that religious conduct is conduct inspired and ruled by Religion. A similar question might be asked and a similar distinction drawn regarding faith and love. In the New Testament, the spirit of which is not metaphysical or philosophical, but intensely practical, each of these is used in a wide sense as constituting the essence of Religion.

If now a briefer and more accurate definition is required, I think we may say that Religion is the SENSE OF GOD. A vivid sense of the being and presence of God, expressing itself in devout worship, may accompany widely divergent intellectual conceptions of the Deity, from the distinct conception of Christian theism to the boundless vagueness of pantheism. Modified by different views of our relation to God, Religion may assume either of those three grand forms under which it appears in the Bible: Fear, Faith, or Love. Intellectually there can be but one *true Religion*, since any absolutely true belief excludes all inconsistent beliefs. But under all possible modifications of belief, that man is *truly religious* in whom intense religious feeling, corresponding

to sincere conviction, inspires and controls daily life. This distinction brings before us the contrast between SUBJECTIVE and OBJECTIVE Religion; that is, between Religion as existing in the individual mind and Religion as the common property of many minds, capable of being framed into a system, embodied in a ritual, taught in a creed. Belief and sentiment, if real, must needs be subjective; but just as knowledge is fused by means of language into a common stock and moulded into traditional forms, so also are belief and sentiment. Thus systematised we speak not simply of Religion but of A RELIGION. An individual may be intensely religious whose creed differs from that of all his neighbours. But a community can be religious only by possessing a Religion held in common. And since feeling is variable and transient, never the same in two persons or in the same person at all times, and can be spread by the contagion of sympathy or the infection of example, but not taught by rule and system, we are brought back to the conclusion, still more strongly with regard to particular Religions than with regard to Religion in general, that Creed is its DOMINANT element, though its ESSENTIAL element is Feeling. Feeling is the soul of Religion: creed is the body, the bone and muscle, apart from which it could have no place or work in the world. Ritual is the garb in which it arrays itself. And the whole of human life is the realm which, if it be strong and wise enough, it is born to rule.

Religion, as I have endeavoured in outline to portray it, is natural to man; but no particular form of Religion. The kind or degree of Religion natural to one person or to one nation is not natural to another. All our innate capacities and faculties demand certain favouring cir-

cumstances, and unfold with very different degrees of force in different persons. If, for example, a youth learn to sing and play easily and with pleasure,—still more, if he persevere in teaching himself in spite of heavy disadvantages, and evince taste and skill—we say he is naturally musical. If, under the best tuition, he prove dull and clumsy, we say he is naturally unmusical. Just so, in proportion as his capacity for Religion intuitively develops even in unfavourable circumstances, man may be said to be *naturally religious*; and so far as it responds languidly and negligently even to powerful stimuli and favourable circumstances, man may be said to be *naturally irreligious*. And as there are persons utterly void of what is called a musical ear, to whom the sweetest melodies and grandest harmonies are but as the sighing and roaring of the wind and the dash of the waves, so there are persons in whom all sense or capacity of Religion seems wanting. To such minds all creeds are alike; all religious earnestness either unintelligible fanaticism or intellectual weakness. Supposing it came to pass that the large majority of mankind grew insensible to music, and an ear for melody and harmony became a rare peculiarity, the love of music would in like manner be regarded as an unaccountable delusion, and the disciples of Mozart and Beethoven as a set of fanatical enthusiasts, dupes of their own fancy. And yet, none the less, Mozart and Beethoven would have truth and science on their side.

If music, poetry, or art of any kind, science or philosophy, politics or commerce, be natural to man, assuredly Religion is natural. If it is natural to think, feel, and speak, it is natural to worship. But though speech is natural, no one language is more natural than

all the rest. Though the pursuit of knowledge is natural, no one art or science is acquired but by study and practice. So, although it is natural to man to be religious, and natural to communities of men to have a Religion, it cannot be pretended that any definite creed has any claim to be natural to mankind. A universal religion, until Christianity proposed it, was an undreamed-of possibility, and would have been regarded by the first intellects of the race as an irrational chimera. If we attempt to obtain the pure essence of a universal creed by eliminating all that is peculiar to the several Religions prevailing in the world, the result is, not a distilled spirit of truth, but such a *caput mortuum* of vague abstractions as could serve no purpose of a religion.

What, then, are we to understand by such phrases, current with some of our best writers, as "*doctrines of Natural Religion*," "*precepts and obligations of Natural Religion*," "*Natural Religion teaches*," and the like? Frankly, I fear that they must be pronounced to have no definite meaning at all. Natural Religion can teach nothing, because it is willing to teach anything. It is the vital element in all theologies, but it lends itself impartially to all, as water takes with equal ease the shape of any vessel into which you pour it. It is a grand phrase, and is capable of a grand though vague meaning. But if taken to stand for some particular set of doctrines, which a few cultivated minds have strung together,—then, despite the stamp of authority which has given it currency, and the ingenious efforts recently made to remind and put it into circulation with a new image and superscription, we can only pronounce it a magnificent misnomer.

The still more current and venerable phrase, NATURAL THEOLOGY, would at first sight seem open to similar objections. Theology means systematised religious thought ; the reduction, or the attempt at the reduction, of our knowledge of God to a scientific form. If natural theology be regarded as based on natural religion, it is clear that from that formless creedless sentiment nothing approaching the character of science can be educed. But, in fact, the word "natural" bears a totally different meaning in these two phrases. Natural theology does not mean a system of religious belief natural to the human mind, or more natural than other systems. It means one which we can construct with the materials furnished by Nature, unaided by any such direct Divine teaching as we understand by the term "revelation." "Divine philosophy, or natural theology," says Lord Bacon, "is that knowledge, or rudiment of knowledge, concerning God which may be obtained by the contemplation of His creatures ; which knowledge may truly be termed divine in respect of the object, and natural in respect of light."

St. Paul's description of natural theology cannot easily be improved : "That which may be known of God is manifest, . . . for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead."

That learned and laborious divine, Dr. Pye Smith, defines natural theology as consisting of "those principles of knowledge concerning the attributes and government of deity which the human mind is naturally competent to discover by observation, reflection, and inference."

Yet, although these and similar views have been cur-

rently accepted, both by systematic theologians and by Christian apologists, it is not easy to assign to natural theology any definite province. "Nature" must either include or exclude human nature. If it be excluded, nature being taken to mean the universe *minus* man, then you exclude morality—that is, righteousness and love—from natural theology. Design, or purpose, may be traced wherever there is construction; intelligence, wherever there is law; benevolence, wherever there is enjoyment of conscious life: but justice, truth, love, duty, virtue—in one word, morality—only where there are human beings, or other intelligent minds capable of moral judgment and action. "Piety," says Cicero, "is justice towards the gods; with whom what law of justice can connect us if there be no communion between God and man? Religion is the knowledge of rightly worshipping the gods; but why they should be worshipped at all, I cannot see, if we neither receive nor hope for any good from them." <sup>1</sup>

Even the proof of the existence of God from wise and benevolent design in the animal, vegetable, and inorganic kingdoms of nature, rests on the analogy of the human mind and its works. Should it be urged that all knowledge, inasmuch as it is human knowledge, presupposes the human mind; yet that we can construct sciences—mechanics, chemistry, physiology, for example—without taking man into account, the reply is obvious. In dealing with qualities and forms of material objects, or pure mental abstractions (as those of arithmetic and geometry), the human mind is concerned only as the subject, not as the object, of thought. But the main questions of theology bear directly upon human nature,

<sup>1</sup> De Natura Deorum, i. 41.

character, and life. It cannot be separated from the question of man's immortality and future happiness or misery; and its central inquiry is, whether the First Cause be a Personal Being with whom men can hold converse and sustain relations of duty, love, obedience, and trust. So that a theology which excludes human nature—practically the largest half (to us) of nature, apart from which all the rest is as though it were not—is not merely impossible, but absurd.

According to St. Paul's view, the evidence for the being, character, and law of God, apart from Scripture, is not confined to the witness borne by "the things that are made" to "His eternal power and godhead;" it includes the witness borne to His love to men as "the offspring of the Godhead,"—"in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" and includes also the witness of His moral law imprinted on man's moral nature.

On the other hand, if Natural Theology include human nature as furnishing in fact its richest materials and most indispensable premises, then it is impossible to exclude the history of mankind; since it is by history that alike the race and the individual show what they are, and become what they are. But if the history of mankind be of necessity included in that study of human nature on which natural theology is based, we cannot but by a most arbitrary caprice overlook the fact that man's religious history has been as powerful a factor as his political, commercial, artistic, or scientific history in his progressive development. Further, the central line of all history, which, connecting itself in turn with all the great empires and civilisations of the past, forms the tap-



root of the life of the leading nations of mankind, is not simply a religious history, but claims to embody (first, in Judaism ; second, in Christianity) what we commonly call "revelation ;" that is to say, a direct manifestation of the Creator in word and action to men. If the Bible were a collection of theological treatises and devout poetry, we could draw a sharp line between Scripture and History ; but it is mainly composed of what claims to be tested and received as veritable literal history, exactly on the same principles as the cuneiform inscriptions or the pages of Thucydides and Tacitus. All attempts to eliminate the supernatural element from these records merely prove that it is impossible to do this except by tearing them to shreds.

The distinction, then, between natural and revealed theology may be accepted as a convenient one in ordinary speech, in a course of university lectures, or in a treatise on some special branch of theistic evidence ; but no sharp boundary line can be drawn between the two with any pretension to scientific accuracy and validity. Let us, above all things, guard against using words with vague meaning or with no real meaning. Words are snares ; and the more abstract and high-sounding, the greater the danger. This caution applies with full force to a term largely employed in the discussion of the province and proofs of theology, whether natural (so called) or Christian : the term "supernatural."

Supernatural signifies above or beyond nature. To connect any definite meaning with this term, therefore, we must first know what nature (or whose nature) is in question. What is natural to one human being is not natural to another. What is natural to man would be supernatural in the lower animals. What is perfectly

natural in one set of circumstances may, by a very slight change in the conditions, become altogether contrary to nature. It is natural for a man to be able to leap two or three feet in the air, or to speak so as to be heard distinctly twenty or thirty yards off; but if we saw any one leap fifty feet into the air, or heard him speak loud enough to be audible ten miles off, we should call this supernatural. So, again, it is natural for a healthy child of two years old to walk and talk; but if a child of three months old did so, it would be frightfully supernatural. For an Eskimo to reason like Newton, or for a Caffre to write a poem equal to "Paradise Lost," would, in the present state of those races, be as supernatural as for an ox to talk or for a walrus to fly. All the works of man—his architecture, engineering, weaving, forging, painting, and the rest—consist in the production of effects entirely out of the range of all that could happen if the course of nature were allowed to proceed undisturbed by human agency. Here, again, nature means one thing if man be included, but quite another if he be left out. Some writers, therefore, have proposed to confine the term "natural" to the material universe; intellect, will, and the whole world of mind being included within the limits of the "supernatural." Where the lower animals find their place in this classification is not clear. But a mode of speech which regards the tossing of a tennis-ball into the air and catching it as a combination of supernatural events, is not likely to meet with general acceptance. People will continue to call it supernatural for a man to walk on the sea; but they will not call the *Iliad*, or St. Peter's, or the invention of the Steam-engine, supernatural; because, although these are unique and stupendous products of human effort, they

imply powers superior in degree and quality only, not in kind, to those of ordinary men.

If there exist beings superior to man, living under wholly different conditions, the powers natural to them would be supernatural in reference to man, just as man's powers would be supernatural if exercised by the lower animals. If such beings were in any way to manifest themselves to mortals, and to take part in human affairs, such an occurrence, from our point of view, would be supernatural, while, from their point of view, it would be perfectly natural. Against the existence of such beings, or their manifestation within the range of human observation, there can be no *a priori* presumption beyond the general unlikelihood of anything very unusual; which goes for nothing when the event is proved to have actually occurred.

Further, if GOD exist—that is to say, an Almighty All-wise Creator of the universe and all it contains—nothing can be supernatural in relation to Him, unless we say that everything is; for He is above all nature except His own, and yet in closest relation with it, and cannot act but in accordance with His own nature. And if the divine be deemed synonymous with the supernatural, then, so far as nature reveals and depends upon God, the supernatural element pervades nature. Just as wherever man comes nature suffers a change, not merely of surface, but of character and purpose; and whether man moulds the air into articulate speech, or turns rivers into harbours, and mountains into level roads, or frames stones and clay into palaces and cathedrals, or transforms plants into garments, or teaches the sunlight to express his thoughts on the coloured canvas or the printed page, or tames the lightning to be his news-

monger and his lamplighter ;—his will and his thought, clothing themselves in matter, are the ruling force by dint of which the whole world of artificial objects becomes what it is—a *cosmos* of embodied ideas : so, in like manner, what we call Nature—the world, the universe—becomes what it is, a *cosmos* of embodied ideas, by being the material vehicle of Divine will and thought ; the garment in which the Divine purpose clothes itself. Nature is thus everywhere pervaded and animated by the Supernatural ; that is, by the Divine.

The bearing of these remarks on what is termed “the argument from design” will be easily perceived. But at present our business is simply with the word “supernatural.” We see that, first of all, it is a term absolutely without meaning until we define the kind of nature to which it refers ; secondly, that it shifts and varies its meaning according to the platform of thought we occupy. It is one of those words which we understand well enough so long as we do not attempt to define them. Useful as a popular term, only pedantic affectation would proscribe it. But, when introduced into philosophical or theological argument, it is apt to lead only to confused thought and inconsequent reasoning.

Possible beliefs concerning God seem to arrange themselves under four classes. First, the belief that there is one God ; that is to say, an everliving Creator of all that we name nature, or the universe : the Father of human spirits and the Fountain of right. This is THEISM. Theism is commonly understood to include a wider creed ; self-existence, eternity, infinity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and immuta-

bility being assumed as essential attributes of deity. These metaphysical conceptions, however, belong to Theism rather as a philosophy of the universe than as a religious creed. The three axioms above indicated, that God is the Creator, the Parent, and the moral Ruler of mankind, appear to compose the simplest and narrowest basis on which Theism can rest. Deny any one of these, and the theistic idea of GOD disappears. "Deism" should etymologically have the same sense with Theism, but it is commonly taken to carry with it the denial of what is called revealed religion. Theism conveys no such implication.

Secondly, ATHEISM: — the denial that the name "God" has any true or intelligible sense. The term "atheist" is employed by St. Paul (*ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, Eph. ii. 12) to denote a moral condition rather than an intellectual creed; and certain modern writers, by their bitter and extravagant tone, seem bent on exemplifying this view.<sup>1</sup> In the nature of the case the only rational attitude of Atheism must be negative and sceptical not positive or dogmatic. When it attempts to demonstrate that "there is no God, and can be none," it savours of insanity; for to know that God does not and cannot exist, one must possess omniscience. But there is nothing *per se* irrational in contending that the evidences of Theism are inconclusive, that its doctrines are unintelligible, or that it fails to account for the facts of the universe, or is irreconcilable with them. To express this kind of polemic against religious faith the term

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, a German writer quoted by Christlieb (*Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 140), who asserts it to be the great task of the age "to educate in atheism personal enemies of a personal God;" or a French politician, who writes: "Our enemy is God. Hatred of God is the beginning of wisdom." (*Ibid.* p. 139.)

“ agnosticism ” has been adopted. Avoiding the insanity of trying to prove that God does not exist, the Agnostic maintains that the question of His existence is out of the range of human faculties and void of real interest.

If Theism be established, Atheism disappears. It neither demands nor admits any other refutation ; but the special objections it urges against Theism require to be dealt with according to their merit.

Thirdly, PANTHEISM is the belief in the identity of God with the universe. Unlike Atheism, it is a positive theory of nature, human nature included. It coincides with Theism in the early steps of its argument, inferring from the existence of nature an eternal cause, and from its multiplicity and mutability an abiding unity. But this unity is not a conscious or a moral unity ; not possessed of what we call personality ; incapable, therefore, of sustaining any personal relation to man. Revelation, which is a personal manifestation of God to men, is therefore impossible. The only manifestation of God is in nature, because apart from nature He has no existence. The universe is nature as effect (*natura naturata*) ; God is nature as cause (*natura naturans*). He is the inner reality of which the world of change and appearance is all that we can know. Pantheism, therefore, resembles Atheism in being incapable of proof. It is an hypothesis which by its nature precludes evidence. Even the matchless rigour of Spinoza’s logic could no more impart reality to the assumptions on which it is built, than the flapping of an eagle’s wings can create the atmosphere in which he flies, and beyond which he cannot soar.

It is possible to combine a subtil kind of Pantheism with Theism ; but as in that case theistic belief would

remain intact, and our philosophy of creation, not our religious creed, would alone be in question, this refined speculation need not here detain us.

Fourthly, POLYTHEISM, the remaining possible belief concerning the Deity, is the belief in many beings to whom the name "God" is applicable. It is evident, however, that the plural use of this name totally changes its meaning. Theism and Polytheism are not in fact mutually exclusive. The ancient Hebrews did not cease to believe that Jehovah was the sole Creator of heaven and earth, when they worshipped Baalim and Ashtaroth, Chemosh and Moloch. The union of the two creeds, to Christian thought so irreconcilable, appeared in those ages so natural that the heaviest penalties could not restrain the Hebrews from idolatry before the Babylonish captivity; while the most profound, cultured, and religious minds of Greece, Rome, and Egypt perceived no inconsistency between the belief in one Supreme Ruler of the universe, Father of gods and men, and the worship of national and local deities—gods many and lords many. Pantheism coalesces still more easily with Polytheism; so that it is in many cases matter rather of learned debate than of attainable certainty or practical import which of the two—Monotheism or Pantheism—was the esoteric faith veiled under the many-coloured garb of Polytheism.

The chief bearing of Polytheism on our inquiry is historical. It concerns the question whether the worship of one God has been developed from that of many gods, or whether (as St. Paul teaches) Polytheism is the corruption of primeval Monotheism.

The doctrine of Comte has obtained wide acceptance (often, perhaps, with scanty inquiry) beyond the bounds

of the Positivist school ; to wit, that the religion of mankind has undergone three stages of development—Fetishism, Polytheism, Monotheism. After these, in the fulness of time, comes philosophic Atheism and the Religion of progress. A generalisation has but to be large enough and it will float far by the sheer force of its audacity. But, sooner or later, all opinion must abide the test of evidence. Tried by this test, I cannot but regard this opinion as both philosophically and historically false.

Philosophically, because the development of Monotheism from Polytheism, or of Polytheism from Fetichism, is rationally inconceivable. Such a process is inexplicable. The beliefs in question are not so related that the one can have begotten the other. The belief in one God, Maker of the universe and King of men, is not a generalisation from the belief in many gods ; nor is it a typical idea, symbolising a multitude of objects, like “bird” or “animal.” The idea of God is neither a collective nor an abstract idea ; like that of humanity, for example, which you obtain from contemplating the infinite multitude of human beings, and which stands either for mankind collectively, or for human nature as represented in each human being. It is the idea of ONE actually existing Spirit, comprehending within himself all other beings, and having no attribute in common with the gods of Heathenism save that of being worshipped. From the twelve gods of Rome, or the three hundred million gods of India, you can no more rise to this idea, still less to the belief in the real being of God, than from beholding any number of men, women, and children you could conclude that there exists an immortal and unchangeable MAN concentrating in his person the



whole of humanity. Analyse the supposition, and you find it impossible.

Nor, again, could Fetishism ever develop into Polytheism. Fetishism properly so called, as found among certain African tribes, is the superstitious reverence—if worship, worship of the lowest sort—paid to certain arbitrarily chosen objects, such as a bird's claw or a fish's fin, a stick or a pebble, in which supernatural powers are believed to reside. It is a worship of things and powers, not of persons; whereas the gods of Polytheism are persons. It may be urged that the great nations of antiquity consecrated temples or altars to abstract ideas as Mind, Peace, Victory, and the like. True, but they personified them, or they could never have worshipped them; and this personification of an abstraction will be found, on careful analysis, to have nothing in common, saving that it is imaginary, with the obscure personality attributed by a child to its doll, or even to a whip, cup, or spoon, and probably by a savage to his fetish. Suppose that all the material fetishes of any given tribe were found to stand for some common divinity, you would then have something far above Fetishism, to which Fetishism never could have given birth. On the other hand, it is perfectly conceivable that if the material objects had formerly been so regarded, the belief in the divinity they represented might have evaporated, leaving only the worship of the several material fetishes as its dregs. Polytheism might degenerate into Fetishism. Fetishism could never evolve Polytheism.

If it be said that this is altogether too narrow a view, and that the term Fetishism is to be understood as including nature-worship in all forms—as mountains, rivers, the wind, the sun, the sky,—I reply that Polytheism

may well be taken to have sprung from this kind of worship, because it is the highest, most spiritual form of Polytheism, not (as the theory requires) the lowest and grossest; but that it is absurd to call this Fetishism. The worship of a permanent natural object or power, as the sun, or the north wind, bears no resemblance to the reverence paid to a gull's beak, or a goat's hoof, as a miraculous talisman.

St. Paul's theory is, to say the least of it, incomparably more rational and philosophical than M. Comte's; to wit, that men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." The mental and moral strain of their primitive creed was intolerable to them, and they therefore satisfied their religious cravings with objects involving no such strain, "and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." They "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

What is philosophically false cannot be historically true. So far as the religions of mankind have a history, its stream flows in the opposite direction to that laid down in the Positivist chart of human progress. "The more we go back," says Professor Max Müller, "the more we examine the earliest germs of every religion, the purer, I believe, we shall find the conception of the Deity." I do not glance here at that ghastly dream (so widely accepted as the mellowest fruit of science) of the religious or irreligious condition of our race when pre-historic man was not yet man, but only an intellectual and very ill-tempered simian, engaged in developing his altruistic affections and social faculties—the rudiments of conscience—by cannibalism. Monkeys

have never yet been observed to have even fetishes. I am content to go no further back than Eden; to begin with man when he was already man: capable of language, agriculture, wedded love, law, and religion. As far as the lamp of history can shed its ray, its witness points to the belief that man began his pilgrimage on earth in the morning light of his Father's smile, knowing and worshipping the one living God, Father of the spirits of all flesh and Maker of heaven and earth.

The ponderous store of testimonies which the learned industry of Dr. Cudworth has amassed in support of this conclusion with regard to the religions of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, requires careful critical sifting to determine its value. But the grand discovery of the identity of the Indian, Persian, Gothic, and Celtic languages with Greek and Latin has put into our hands a clue, wanting which the greatest scholars of former generations wandered in uncertain conjecture. The accomplished scholar just now quoted has, with fascinating simplicity of style, converted the arcana of philosophy into common-places of literature. Everybody now knows (or may know at the cost of an hour's pleasant reading) that the Religions of all the races now comprehended under the name Aryan are branches from one stem; that Jove, Zeus, Tuisco, Dyu or Dyaus, all, in their primitive meaning, signify "heaven;" that is, the visible sky, in which the sun, moon, and stars shine and move; and that these names were anciently applied, together with the title Father, to the Supreme God, as either identified with or symbolised by that light-filled, over-arching, all-embracing sky. Thus we have the key to the astounding paradox that while, in Greek theology and theogony, Zeus, the degraded Zeus of

Polytheism, is stained with every crime and weakness of human nature, the hero of adventures which could evade the contempt of serious thinkers among the Greeks themselves only by passing for allegories ; Greek RELIGION describes and addresses Zeus in the same terms in which Christians speak of God. When Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and their brother sages teach either Monotheism or Pantheism, they may be supposed to have evolved it from their own reasonings on the universe, though certainly not from the current Polytheism. But Homer (in the *Odyssey*), Hesiod, Æschylus, and their brother poets, are expressing not the soarings of their own imagination, but the voice of elder times and antique faith, when they speak of Zeus, father of gods and men, as Almighty, All-wise, the Giver of all good, the Hearer of prayer, the Avenger of crime, the Unchangeable One, who was, and is, and is to come.

Taken with the fact that the root-meaning of Zeus, and of the corresponding names in other languages, is Sky, or Heaven, what does all this mean? It must mean either that our forefathers, in those forgotten ages in which they yet spoke one language, felt within their hearts the sense of deity — that “yearning after the gods” of which Homer speaks, — and looking around for some object of worship said, “Heaven is above all, sees all, embraces all ; is the eternal dwelling-place of light : let us worship the SKY.” Or else, that believing, whether through primitive tradition or intuitive piety, this whole glorious universe to be the work of One who is also the Author of life and Giver of all good, they sought for A NAME and looked around for a SYMBOL of the Eternal God, and in their fashion prayed to our Father who is in heaven.

Furthermore, the same philological clue through the dark labyrinth of the past, with the further help of the ancient Sanscrit religious books, leads us to conclude that as the worship of the one Heaven-Father is older than Polytheism, so the oldest form of Polytheism, which is also the grandest, purest, and most natural, is not (as has so earnestly been maintained) the worship of deified men, but that of personified natural powers, objects, and appearances ; as the Planets, the Dawn, the Rain, the producing power of the Earth. This fact harmonises with the belief that the idea of the One God was gradually broken up and lost in the variety of his attributes and the manifoldness of his working. Imagination, with its personifying power, turned each of these ' broken lights ' into a distinct deity. For the difference between Theism and Polytheism answers to the difference between Reason and Imagination.<sup>1</sup> The idea of the one infinite, eternal, and all-creating mind is an idea or belief of Reason. Imagination, as I have before said, can deal with it only in the way of symbol ; as in what critics are pleased to term the anthropomorphism of the Bible. As soon as the symbol is mistaken for reality, and the eye,

<sup>1</sup> If it be objected, that Imagination precedes Reason in the child, and that therefore in the childhood of mankind the faith of Imagination must have preceded the faith of Reason ; I reply that the objection is not founded in fact. It is true that imagination frequently attains a power in the mind of a child which can overmaster not only reason but the senses ; true likewise that the full ripeness of reason comes late—in fact in many cases never comes at all. Yet for all this, Reason precedes Imagination. During the first two or three years of life the infant intellect is intensely in earnest ; spelling out the alphabet of reality, and laying the foundations of knowledge, so deep that they are out of sight of the mind itself. Not till about the fourth year does the imagination manifest its full force. If the analogy holds good, it confirms the belief that the life of mankind began with reality, not with imagination ; with reason, not with superstition. Man walked with God. Only in after times he spread wings of fancy and soared into the dreamland of Polytheism.

ear, voice of God, and the like, are understood to mean that God exists in human form, we have the essence of Polytheism. Imagination will not rest content with creating one such deity, but will run rampant till every bush and waterfall has its indwelling divinity.

Ample evidence is within reach of patient inquiry to sustain the assertion that Monotheism is not the child, but the parent, of the Polytheistic faiths of mankind. In China, once a year, in one sacred spot, the "God of Heaven" has a solitary worshipper in the person of the Emperor: a custom pointing back to an immense antiquity. In Madagascar, where "the gods" lately given to the flames were wretched bunches of rubbish, the wisdom of elder times is still current in proverbs which speak of an all-seeing Eye from which the criminal vainly strives to hide. In southern Africa, among tribes that had lost, to all appearance, every vestige of religious belief, Dr. Moffatt discovered, in the etymology of a word which had ceased to convey any distinct meaning, the fossil impression of a dead faith (once living) in "One above." No one will pretend that there is the slightest evidence that the immemorial faith of the North American Indians in the "Great Spirit" is either a generalisation from the belief in many gods or a development from the worship of sticks and stones. Even South Sea cannibals and Australian savages have been found not destitute of legends of creation,—the withered and tattered relics of ancestral belief in a Creator, or Father, of men.

The definition of Religion "as a sense of God," though broad enough to include Theism, Pantheism, and Polytheism, is not broad enough to include the novel religions, so-styled, perplexing in number and variety, which have

been propounded of late years ; offering themselves as candidates to fill the place of effete and moribund Theism, and claiming to forecast, if not to constitute, the universal Religion of the future. Without some glance at these, our preliminary survey of religious belief would be incomplete. But I question the possibility of framing any definition of Religion which shall comprehend them, except one based on bad logic. Because religious worship implies supreme devotion, it seems to be inferred (illogically enough) that supreme devotion constitutes religion ; so that anything to which a man is enthusiastically devoted may pass muster as his religion. So we have the religion of art, of humanity, of science, of duty. We might speak with equal justness of the religion of politics, of money-getting, of amusement. Phrases like these are perfectly intelligible as lively metaphors. Nobody is deceived if we say that a man worships his cash-box or his fireside. Epigram is one thing, definition another. But when these loose figures are put forth as accurate statements of what we are to understand by Religion, they must vitiate, it seems to me, any reasoning founded upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The weighty task before us is not a criticism of

<sup>1</sup> An admirable description of Religion is given by a leading English Positivist, Mr. F. Harrison : “ We mean by Religion a scheme which shall explain to us the relations of the faculties of the human soul within ; of man to his fellow-men beside him ; to the world, and its order around him ; next, that which brings him face to face with a Power to which he must bow ; with a Providence which he must love and serve ; with a Being which he must adore—that, which, in fine, gives man a doctrine to believe, a discipline to live by, an object to worship.” — *Nineteenth Century*, April 1877. Excellent ! But what is it but the very fanaticism of imagination—verging on insanity—to find this Scheme, this Power, this Providence, this Being, this doctrine, discipline, and worship, in collective Humanity ; as it is in the present, as it has been in *even the post-Simian* past, or as we have any sober ground (at least apart from Christianity) for believing that it will be in the future ?

unbelief, but a criticism of faith. The guiding principle in a discussion of this nature—where one side propounds evidence, and another side propounds objections—I hold to be, that positively conclusive evidence cannot be countervailed by any amount of insoluble objection, provided it is conceivable that enlarged knowledge would furnish the solution. If faith cannot show sufficient cause, scepticism is an intellectual necessity. If faith be justified, scepticism is *ipso facto* condemned.

It is, therefore, not within our purpose to enter on any analysis of these anti-theistic claimants to the title and place of Religion. Differing almost as widely among themselves as they do from Christianity, they present certain marked features in common. (1) They are naturally incapable of proof, as not making belief a vital element of Religion. (2) They recognise Religion as indispensable to human nature, personally and socially. (3) They display a curious eagerness to adopt the traditional names and phrases of “the old religions” (of course with a totally altered meaning), great indignation being expressed if their right to do this be questioned. Another common feature characterising many of the advocates of these systems is a scornful bitterness towards what they suppose to be the creed of orthodoxy; which abhorred creed is set forth in the most grotesque distortions, with no attempt (so far as I have been able to observe) to appreciate its real grandeur and loveliness, or to consider it from the point of view of its intelligent adherents.

Two special claims on behalf of these creedless sentimental religions call for brief notice: the one advanced by Mr. Herbert Spencer on behalf of a religion of feeling; the other by the late Mr. John Stuart Mill, and also



by living Positivist writers, on behalf of a religion in which Humanity is the supreme idea ; God and immortality being rigorously excluded.

Mr. Spencer, after depicting in his trenchant style the controversy between Religion and Science, propounds what he is pleased to announce as "the reconciliation." It is a reconciliation much like what might be imagined at the close of the great war between France and Germany, had it been proposed that Germany should take simply the surface of the ceded provinces, with all that was upon it ; leaving to France the whole atmosphere, except the portion needed for buildings and for breathing, and the underground to the centre, mines, quarries, and wells excepted. Science is to take the known and the intelligible ; Religion, the mysterious and the unknowable. Such a reconciliation is worse than the strife it pretends to heal. It mistakes a property which religion shares in common with science for its distinctive essence. It eliminates all that is positive in religion. That which is negative, that which religion and science together can *not* teach, remains—the unknown. To call it "the unknowable" is to assert too much. As our faculties are developed and new instruments of knowledge are devised, the unknowable becomes first the knowable and then the known. There is always an impassable frontier between our knowledge and our ignorance ; but it is an ever-retreating boundary : where it is impassable to-day it may be practicable to-morrow. The absolutely unknowable is that of which we can predicate nothing, which, therefore, cannot inspire even curiosity, much less worship. It betokens great confusion of thought to identify two ideas so different as the unknown and mysterious, and the unknowable. Mystery is a veil ; the unknowable is a blank. No one

longs to lift the veil unless he at least suspects *that* behind it which will reward his gaze. A religion void of mystery would not only lack one of its most powerful charms : it would be self-convicted of falsehood. But mere mystery, bare impossibility of knowledge, can never inspire worship or faith, fear, love, or obedience, Before an altar can be reared to "the unknown God," he must at least be believed to be God.

The so-called strife between religion and science is not due to anything essential to either, but to the superstition, bigotry, and presumption of religious men, on the one hand, and of scientific men, on the other. The only possible reconciliation is, for religious men to understand and accept the truths of Science ; and for scientific men to understand and accept the truths of Religion.

Mr. John Stuart Mill places the origin of Religion in the intellect. "Religion, as distinguished from Poetry, is the product of the craving to know whether" our "imaginary conceptions have realities answering to them in some other world than ours." Leaving out of account "its origin in rude minds," he accounts for "its persistency in the cultivated," from "the small limits of man's certain knowledge, and the boundlessness of his desire to know." Some share, however, is conceded to the heart. "So long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations, so long there will be a craving for higher things, which finds its most obvious satisfaction in Religion." (*Essays*, p. 104.) Mr. Mill thinks that "the idealisation of our earthly life, the cultivation of the higher idea of what *it* may be made, is capable of supplying a poetry, and, in the best sense, a religion, equally fitted to exalt the feelings, and (with the same aid from education) still better calculated to ennoble the conduct than any belief respect-

ing the unseen powers." The name Religion is here divested of all those sentiments of veneration, trust, obedience, awe, and adoration which can belong only to the worship of a Personal Creator of all things and Father of Spirits, and is used to signify supreme enthusiastic devotion to the good of mankind under the inspiration of a lofty ideal. In like manner Mr. Mill speaks of the devotion of the antique Roman to Rome as a passionate religion. And he affirms that "this Religion of Humanity is not only entitled to be called a Religion, it is a better Religion than any of those that are ordinarily called by that title" (p. 110).

This assertion is vindicated, first, upon the ground that the old religions—Christianity is, of course, pre-eminently in view—appeal to the love of happiness, and fear of loss or suffering; whereas the new Religion is "disinterested." "The habit of expecting to be rewarded in another life for our conduct in this, makes even virtue itself no longer an exercise of unselfish feelings." This argument, urged with passionate earnestness by more recent advocates of the claims of Positivism to furnish a better religion than Christianity, wears an impressive air of lofty nobility. It reproduces the marble grandeur of ancient Stoicism.<sup>1</sup> But it rests upon narrowness and confusion. In the first place, it confuses religion with ethics,—the inspiration of motives which appeal to the heart, with the obligation of those which bind the conscience; and mutilates the idea of virtue by narrowing it to that of duty. Where simple duty—moral obligation—is alone in question, a man ought to need no selfish hope or fear, to induce him to do what is right or deter him from what is wrong. To bribe a soldier to do his

<sup>1</sup> See *Problèmes de Morale Sociale*, par E. Caro, p. 89.

duty, or a judge to pass a righteous sentence, is to insult, corrupt, and degrade him. The obedience which a child surrenders to the rod or sells for sugar-plums is no true obedience. Paley's definition of virtue<sup>1</sup> will find few defenders. Truth must be loved for truth's sake; honour for honour's sake; duty for duty's sake; and the welfare of mankind for mankind's sake. But it is an enormous *non sequitur* to leap to the conclusion that a man owes no duty to himself; that it is base selfishness to desire the noblest kind of happiness, and aspire to the highest development of his being; or that LOVE—which is inseparable from the desire to behold the happiness and share the fellowship of those we love—is inconsistent with the loftiest religion. These and many like fallacies are implied in the doctrine that a religion is better in proportion as it suppresses hope, love, and every noble aspiration, as well as fear and prudence; and appeals to a part only, not the whole, of man's moral nature. Disinterestedness is indeed a noble virtue when it means refusal to let any thought of our own interest hinder our concern for others. But it is no virtue at all if it means absence of all interest of our own, all care for our own dignity, welfare, and future. There are cases in which absolute self-sacrifice, like that of Arnold von Winkelried, commands our unbounded approval and admiration. But he would have been less noble, not more noble, if in that supreme moment of heroic devotion he had no regret for wife or children, home or friends; no wish that it could have been possible for him to see the freedom and triumph of the country he was dying to save. I protest with the whole force of my moral

<sup>1</sup> “The doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.”—*Mor. Phil.* b. i. ch. vii.

nature against this abuse of such terms as “disinterested ;”—against this narrow stoical theory of human nature, and assert, in contradiction to it, that that Religion must be the noblest, as well as the mightiest, which appeals to human nature as a whole, giving due play, though no more than due, to every lawful native affection of the soul ; and, further, that whether what St. Paul calls “that blessed hope” be a reality or an illusion, only the noblest, purest, and, in the truest sense, most unselfish souls are capable of being moved to intense desire, and stimulated in right and benevolent action, by the prospect of an immortality of perfect holiness, perfect love, and eternal converse with the Source and Archetype of all moral goodness.

Mr. Mill’s remaining arguments for the moral inferiority of Christian Theism to the Religion of Humanity, with his caustic remarks as to “a certain torpidity, if not positive twist, in the moral faculties” requisite for the hearty adoration of the Creator of this “clumsily made and capriciously governed world ;” and as to the danger of our moral sentiments sinking “to the low level of the ordinances of nature,” I think I may safely leave to answer themselves. But I cannot close without a word respecting the attitude and temper of Positivist anti-theologians towards Christian Theism.

Worship, as we have seen, is of the essence of Religion. The worship of the Unknowable must needs be an inscrutable mystery. But the Religion of Humanity has its fully developed scheme of worship ; its ritual, priest, church, even sacraments. Were it not that when it shall have become the universal Religion of the future, no profane or sceptical spectators will be left, it cannot be denied that the full growth of Pananthropism would

present to such observers some temptation to levity. The adoration of mankind by mankind ; the invocation of an incomprehensible and impossible ideal ; the worship of a Supreme Being of which only a small part can exist at once ; which is partly dead, partly being born, and mostly awaiting development in a future which may destroy instead of developing It ; by those who are engaged in making It wiser, better, and happier ; certainly presents a broad mark for satire. Perhaps some uneasy consciousness of this weak side of a system which, when confronted with Christian worship, cannot help looking like stage mimicry, explains the bitterness with which its adherents assail Christianity. Such worship as the Christian believes due to GOD, they profess to regard as immoral : a servile and grovelling adulation, degrading to the offerer and to the receiver. Adulation, to confess truth ! Baseness, to do that for which moral excellence is the one essential qualification ; namely, to perceive the beauty and glory of a supreme love, purity, and righteousness, of which our own can be but the faint shadow ! Humiliation, to take delight in contemplating at once the immeasurable distance and the essential likeness between the spark of pure and noble life in our own bosoms and the uncreated, undecaying light which feeds the fire of goodness wherever it glows ! Degradation, to look up to what is infinitely above us, and to rejoice that neither goodness nor power, neither wisdom nor love, is finite and fragmentary ; or to love with boundless love all that ought to be loved, when it is manifested on an infinite scale ! What is baseness, what is degradation, what deserves disdain, if it be not this : to be incapable of reverence, admiration, and self-annihilating love ?

Let it be forgiven me if, for a moment, I lose the pas-

sionless calm of untroubled logic ; because we are here on moral ground, where it is shameful to be insensible, and because I am dealing with arguments which appeal to a righteous sense of moral indignation, and seek to surround with contempt the very idea of Divine worship. Their object is, to enlist the religious emotions themselves on the side of the denial of God. Worship is morally degrading when offered to a base object. It is intellectually degrading when offered to a fictitious object. But if Christian Theism is truth ; if God is, and is what Christ taught men that He is ; then we cannot assert too boldly that worship is the most elevating and loftiest exercise of which human beings are capable. To revere what deserves reverence, to obey what rightly claims obedience, to trust what is worthy to be trusted, to admire enthusiastically what is surpassingly admirable, as well as to love with all our heart what is infinitely love-worthy, is the very highway of moral elevation and ennoblement.

O Thou Eternal Light, whom to know is life ; of whose wisdom all truth is the out-shining ! — O Thou Eternal Love, of whose goodness all human goodness is the image, and all pure joy the outflow ! — Unveil Thy light, disclose Thy love, to every spirit that seeks truth and loves goodness : “ and, in Thy wisdom, make us wise ! ”





LECTURE II.

*THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.*



## LECTURE II.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

#### I.

THAT “this universal frame,” with its intricately balanced mechanism, its marvellous and varied beauty, its endless activity of change, and its ever-flowing stream of multiform life and conscious enjoyment, cannot have come into being without adequate cause is self-evident.<sup>1</sup> This is one of those intuitive certainties of reason in which common sense and philosophy coincide. To refrain from inquiry after this cause would be to renounce reason ; especially when we consider how intimately we ourselves are part and parcel of the universe, yet in self-conscious thought and will how mysteriously distinct from it. The imperious necessity which urges us to ask in all other directions ‘the reason why,’ presses with irresistible force here. Minds of a certain type—keen and daring, but absorbed in lower ranges of inquiry (as well as those lighter or coarser minds which are indifferent to truth)—may evade this necessity by satisfying themselves that the question lies out of range of human faculties. But the general intellect of mankind will resent this arbitrary limitation. The inquiry whether there be a First Cause of all things,

<sup>1</sup> “I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud and the Alcoran than that this universal frame is without a mind.”—BACON’S *Essay on Atheism*.

and if there be, What or Who that First Cause is, must, in the nature of things, be the highest question to which reason can apply itself ; and the answer, if answer there be, the sublimest portion of human knowledge : we may presume also, the most fruitful. Unless, therefore, it can be decisively proved that the answers heretofore given to this greatest of questions are fallacious, and that no certain or even probable answer is possible, the intellect of mankind will not long consent to be warned off as an unauthorised trespasser from the most splendid province of its domain of inquiry.

Moreover, even if the supposition of an eternal series of generations of organised beings were not absurd, it is historically certain that our world, in its present condition, is far enough from being eternal. At a time incalculably distant, yet near in comparison with the illimitable past which must have preceded, this globe was incapable of supporting any kind of organic life of which we have any experience or conception. During a yet remoter past, although the materials of our earth were in existence, its mass had not been formed into a separate globe, nor any provision made in the measure of its orbit, the timing of its axial rotation, and the inclination of the axis to the orbit, for that balance of sunshine and shadow and succession of seasons which are the prime conditions of the life it now sustains. Our reason demands an account of this process and of its results ; not a mere narration of its successive appearances, but a theory of its possibility. We ask for a First Cause not as a mere starting-point, but as an explanation : a cause not merely prior in respect of time to this long series of events, but adequate to account for it. The whole chain, and not merely the first link, has to be accounted for.

Three principal methods have been employed in order to silence or invalidate this demand of reason for a First Cause of the universe.

First, the metaphysical method ; which, admitting the subjective necessity of the idea of cause, denies its objective worth. That is to say, though we are compelled by the constitution of our minds to believe that every event must have a cause ; and no less that every harmonious combination of events, sequent or coexistent, must have a cause sufficient to explain their combination ; yet this inward necessity of our own minds carries with it no proof of any real corresponding necessity in the nature of things. Of things in themselves, it is argued, we know nothing. Within our little world of thought the existence of God may be an unavoidable hypothesis ; but this gives no assurance that any corresponding necessity binds the universe of reality outside our minds. Akin to this objection, and equally metaphysical, though employed by professed enemies of metaphysics, is the doctrine that our knowledge, being derived from experience, is bounded by experience. We have no experience, it is argued, of God as Cause, Designer, or Ruler of the universe ; the belief in His existence, therefore, is a superstition doomed perhaps to hover on the skirts of human belief, but an outlaw from the territory of legitimate knowledge. Whereas, in truth, the whole value of experience lies in its power to lead or point beyond itself, and its treasures would be gathered with fruitless toil could they not purchase for us a knowledge of the future, the distant, and the imperceptible. If experience means what men have seen and handled, then the conservation of energy, the undulation of light, the affinities, attractions, and velocities of atoms

have no place in knowledge bounded by and based on experience. But if experience means the right interpretation of facts, and if the facts of the universe duly interrogated bear clear witness to the existence of God, then the existence of God is as much a part of human experience as the rapidity of light-undulations or the identity of heat and motion. A thorough treatment of these metaphysical objections, however, must involve a scrutiny of the knowledge and worth of human knowledge in general. Meanwhile it is plain that we are rational beings. Intellectually we are not at liberty to reject any conclusion which reason finds itself compelled to affirm, upon the plea that were our reason differently constituted we might think otherwise. And, practically, we are bound to act according to reason, not in defiance of reason. Under penalties!

The second method by which it is sought to get rid of the idea of a First Cause, is the method of attenuation or dissipation. According to what is known as the doctrine of evolution, the combinations at present constituting the universe are regarded as the outcome of an immeasurable series of infinitesimal changes from an original condition in which all existing matter was diffused in intense rarity through illimitable space. The idea of Process is thus substituted for that of Cause—the *How* for the *Wherefore*. The mind is confounded by the inconceivable vastness of time and space, slowness of development, and multiplicity of changes; and this stupefaction of the imagination we are required to accept as the satisfaction of the intellect. But a problem is not solved by pulverising it into imperceptible fragments. The idea of process cannot really supersede that of cause; the longest process as much implies an ade-

quate cause or causes as the shortest. The quantity of work to be accounted for is the same, spread it as you may over time and space. One of two things: either the whole system of things now existing—planetary masses and orbits, chemical affinities and compounds, plants, animals, and man, with the distribution of earth, air, and water which render life possible—must in some sense have potentially existed in that equably diffused mass of matter; in which case reason demands a First Cause quite as imperatively as though the whole universe had sprung into being in a moment. Or else, at each infinitesimal stage of development an infinitesimal something was introduced which was not there previously; in which case the presence of a First Cause—that is, a cause which is itself uncaused—is requisite not at one end of the chain merely, but along the whole chain. To this point also we shall have to return hereafter, when speaking of the proof of creative design.

The third method may be called the method of logical definition. It excludes from the word “cause” the ideas of power and necessity, substituting those of unvarying sequence and uniform experience. By a change in the meaning of words it seems to be supposed possible to change the fundamental laws of thought. By the ablest exponent of this view a cause is defined as “the antecedent” or, again, “the sum total of the conditions” which any given consequent “invariably follows.”<sup>1</sup> This definition, it is to be observed, is sufficient and convenient for scientific purposes, because science (to use the old-fashioned logical phrase) is of universals, not of particulars; that is to say, science embraces only those facts of coexistence and sequence

<sup>1</sup> Mill's *Logic*, vol. i. pp. 397-409. First edition.

which are constant, and reducible to general laws. But it is manifest, in the first place, that this is not that notion of cause intuitively springing up in the human mind as soon as it begins to reason, which is expressed in the child's perpetual question, "*Why does this do so? What makes it?*" The child may be, and often is, answered simply that *it always is so*; and his mind is appeased; not, however, because his question has been satisfied, but because another idea is presented in which his mind can equally find rest—that of the invariable order of things. But if he be a thoughtful child, though silenced for the moment, he feels that the unsolved question remains behind, the more urgent if it applies to many instances instead of only one,—"*Why is it always so?*" Invariable sequence, instead of being identical with causation, or explaining causation, is itself a result of which we cannot help asking the cause. We are not more certain that a new series of events cannot begin, a unique and unconnected event occur, or a new substance come into existence, without a cause—that is to say, a power adequate to account for it—than we are sure that an invariable sequence denotes a permanent, regularly-acting cause.

If it be asserted that such terms as 'power,' 'adequate,' 'acting,' are really words void of any corresponding ideas, we ask how we are to account for their universal presence in language, and for the impossibility of dispensing with them. The ideas may be too simple to admit analysis, or the terms too highly abstract to be ranked under any higher genus; but, certainly, neither can reason part with the ideas nor language with the terms.

Further, a very large proportion of causes are incapable of being reduced to cases of invariable antecedence



and sequence. If we say that the downfall of Constantinople was the indirect cause of the revival of the study of Greek in Western Europe, and thus, more remotely, one of the causes of the Reformation ; or that the expedition to Moscow was the primary cause of Napoleon's downfall, and the battle of Waterloo the crowning cause of his ruin, we speak of causes acting but once in the world's history, incapable of repetition, and consequently incapable of reduction to scientific rule. Again, to take a simple example of another sort : if I ask the cause or reason why an electro-plated fork or spoon looks as if made of silver, the chemical and electrical laws and the process of manufacture are explained to me, which are the necessary antecedents of which the invariable consequent is the deposition of a thin film of silver. But had the workman, through mistake or by order, dipped the article into another bath containing gold in solution, it would have been gilt instead of plated. The workman's choice, therefore, or his blunder, or the will of his superior, was, in an equally true and important sense, the *cause* of the fork or spoon being so plated. And of this kind of cause science can give no account.

Two divers sets of causes are ever interworking and counterworking in the tangled web of human affairs : the invariable, and thus calculable, operations of nature, conformed to immutable and perfectly wise laws ; and the incalculable, because variable, action of human wills, guided by duty, passion, habit, authority, wisdom, ignorance, folly, as the case may happen. The desperate attempt so often made, may be as often repeated, to deny the diverse nature of these two sets of causes, and to include human affection, judgment, and volition under the invariable order of physical causation bound

with the iron band of changeless law. Two self-evident facts for ever defy this endeavour. First, that the causes of human volition are not antecedents but results of volition; future, not past; foreseen, but as yet non-existent. Secondly, that each human being is a new and variable individual; so that the same circumstances do not constitute the same motives to two persons, or to the same person at different times; nor, in fact, is any constant standard or measure of motive possible.

If now we attempt to include in our idea of the cause of the simplest event all those conditions without which it could not have occurred, we find ourselves led back, not merely along an immeasurable chain of antecedents, but a chain every link of which depends on innumerable other chains. The falling of a tear-drop on an old letter connects a momentary flush of emotion with the lives possibly of many persons through many years, and with the laws that hold the globe together and roll it in its orbit.

Seeking a clue in this boundless labyrinth we find it in the existence of what have been called Permanent Causes. These we perceive to divide themselves into three great classes: (1) Human Minds, whose properties, though incalculably variable, have constant limits; (2) Organised Natures, whose properties are to a very great extent constant; and (3) Inorganic Bodies, whose properties are (as we suppose) absolutely constant. Further, we perceive Forces, once regarded as essentially distinct but now discovered to be to a wonderful degree transmutable into one another, the quantity of which in the universe is believed to be constant, but which we are at present incapable of conceiving apart from matter,—that is, the ultimate material of which inorganic bodies are

made up. By a process of analysis which scientific men are accustomed to call 'physical,' but which in its most important steps is purely mental, consisting in a train of subtil reasoning, we pursue material ~~forces~~<sup>forms</sup> far beyond the boundary at which their minute particles escape the ken of our senses and resolve them into indestructible immutable atoms, whose incessant activity conforms itself to unchangeable laws. Bold surmise, peering into the remotest recesses of the invisible, asks whether atoms may not themselves be resolvable into force ; or, perhaps, into force and a perfect and homogeneous medium of force.

Atoms and Force, then,—atoms, possibly but a manifestation of force,—do these furnish wherewithal to construct or explain the universe as we find it ? Are we at liberty, as intelligent and honest thinkers, to believe that force, being supposed constant in quantity, and atoms, supposed immutable and indestructible, may be eternal and uncaused ? Or do forces in their correlation and balanced action, and atoms in their total inertness and uselessness if any one kind of them be isolated, their boundless activity and usefulness in combination, bear as distinctly as a steam-engine, a painting, a lighthouse, or any other human work, those marks of ideal unity and voluntary design which are the very autograph of mind ? And, further, supposing atoms eternal and uncaused, can any possible quantity, quality, and relation of atoms and atomic forces account for the most important part (to us) of the universe—OURSELVES ? Granting mind, we can in a certain sense explain the material universe ; because all the phenomena of sensation, which are the sole channel through which the news of an outside universe reaches us, and on which all our reasonings

about it rest, are in the last analysis purely mental modifications of our own consciousness. But, granting atoms and forces, we cannot advance a step towards the explanation of self-conscious thought, feeling, and will. A fathomless chasm, which no imaginable apparatus of molecular vibration can bridge, yawns between the air-waves impinging on the nerves of hearing and the delicious sensations of melody and harmony ; between the light-waves affecting the optic nerve and the radiant glory of colour and delicate beauty of form.

To ordinary common sense the supposition that by any modification of matter we can explain mind, is absurd ; because matter, as perceived or conceived by us, has none of the properties of mind ; and mind as perceived or conceived by us, has none of the properties of matter. Nevertheless, keen and powerful intellects are found maintaining that these two substances, diverse by every criterion we can apply, are at bottom identical. In the whole of nature, they tell us, we discover nothing but matter and force. Matter we know, and force we know ; but what is spirit ? It is a strange oversight for a philosopher to forget to count himself. Yet who does not see that in the words, "WE find," "WE know," that very element is interpolated in thought which is verbally denied ? Atoms cannot say to themselves, *We are atoms*. Heat and gravitation and chemical affinity cannot say to one another, *We are force*. Matter and mind reveal their existence to us by methods which have nothing in common ; in the one case by the invariable and purely natural symbolism of what we call our sensations, in the other by direct consciousness and by the variable symbolism, partly natural, partly artificial, of language, in-

cluding tone, feature, and gesture, and by the sensible results of volition. Even in regard to those prime conditions of atoms and force—Space and Time—we can conceive no relation whatever between thought and space; and the relation of thought to time is so variable that in different states of experience hours may seem to be minutes, or minutes to be hours, or even years. Tried alike by the mental test of definition and by the physical test of ceaseless experiments infinitely varied, we have just the same reason for considering mind different from matter that we have for considering colour distinct from oxygen or hydrogen from heat.

“Precisely so,” the sceptic may reply; “just the same reason—no less and *no more*. Colour is vibration. Heat is vibration. In the sunbeam one length of wave produces colour, another heat, another chemical action; all are forms of one force. All science points towards the identification of matter with force, as well as towards the unity of all kinds of force. Why should not thought, feeling, will, be forms of that one and the same force of which all other phenomena in the universe are manifestations;—*as* distinct, but not *more* distinct: in other words, fundamentally one? What does it signify, whether we say that mind is at bottom identical with matter, or that matter is identical with mind?”

This appears to be the line along which modern sceptical thought is advancing. The names ‘materialist’ and ‘atheist’ are indignantly repudiated by writers who all the same deny any separate existence of mind from ‘*cerebration*’ and scornfully reject the essence of Theism, namely, the doctrine that the omnipotent will of an Infinite Mind is the first cause of the universe. It is not within the range of my present purpose to analyse or criticise

the particular forms bestowed by the genius or skill of individual writers on this general tendency of modern scepticism. It matters not whether the name "God" be employed or rejected; whether we are told that the phenomena of mind and matter are "faint manifestations" and "vivid manifestations" of the Unknowable; or that "God is the universal causal law, the sum of all forces;" or that the reality underlying the poetic anthropomorphism of Biblical Theism is "a stream of tendency making for righteousness;" or, again, that God is the Perfect Idea of which all reality is the imperfect manifestation. The result is practically the same. In the endless phantasmagoria of pantheistic speculation the several views dissolve insensibly into one another. Even Positivism, notwithstanding its Religion of Humanity, must be regarded as pantheistic; inasmuch as to recognise the universal dominion of law is to recognise the intellectual unity of the universe; and the seat of this intellectual unity, since it cannot reside in separate atoms and particular laws, must be either in a Mind pervading the universe,—which is Theism; or in the totality of the universe, which is Pantheism.<sup>1</sup>

Pantheism, in whatever form, accepts (as we have before noted) the starting-point of Theism, to wit, that the

<sup>1</sup> Probably the most psychologically curious as well as intellectually unsatisfactory of recent views is that advanced in the posthumous Essays of the late Mr. Mill. It is neither atheistic nor pantheistic, but a kind of hazy semi-theism—like a flag of distress hung out on the ocean of doubt. It admits the argument for the existence of a personal Creator to have "considerable force," but denies (not without a strong tinge of that controversial bitterness so often betrayed by sceptical writers) His power and His goodness. "Monism" is at present one of the most recent developments of Pantheism; so styling itself in opposition to the "dualism" of all creeds which distinguish spirit from matter, the Creator from His works. It is not, like the Pantheism of Spinoza, the offspring of rigorous logic wedded to metaphysical axioms, but a cross-bred between science and fancy.

all-comprehending unity underlying the infinite multiplicity of the universe is a fact of which reason must give some account to itself. Under this supreme fact all our particular experience arranges itself; and to ignore or suppress it is the acme of unreason. There must be a First Cause, or (if we prefer the phrase) First Being, without which neither our conscious selves nor the outer world with which we are in contact would be possible. But when Theism adds,—“This primal Being and originating Cause is a personal intelligent Will: God is eternally distinct from His works, and would exist had He never created or were He to destroy them,”—Pantheism refuses to allow reason to take this second step. “Mind and will,” it says, “are the last products, not the first cause, of the working of the universe. Spirit and matter are one. God and nature are one. To speak of God as distinct from His works is to talk either poetry or nonsense.”

At this point, then, issue is joined between the hereditary faith of mankind and that powerful spirit of modern thought which has broken with the past, but boasts that the future is all its own. The combatants fight under very different conditions. Pantheism is naturally incapable of proof; because, supposing it true, no evidence of its truth is conceivable. Its theory of the universe consists not in any explanation, but in the denial that any explanation is needed or possible. Consequently, Pantheism is incapable of direct refutation. Theism, on the contrary, is nothing if it be not capable of proof. It claims to be, not simply an explanation—the only explanation—of the facts of the universe, but the exposition of that practical truth on which the right conduct of human life turns, which is the fountain of

duty and the key of happiness. Its evidence, therefore, must be sufficient to warrant action. On the other hand, it is spared the necessity of directly combatting antagonist systems. If Theism can produce convincing evidence, Pantheism, Atheism, and Agnosticism vanish of necessity.

What, then, is the nature, and what the validity of the evidence on which we may build our belief in God,—that is, our belief in the existence of an all-wise, all-powerful, and perfectly righteous and benevolent Maker and Ruler of all things? What is the BASIS OF FAITH?

## II.

This great inquiry may be approached from two directions. First, we may assume the scientific attitude, and attempt the inductive method. Disclaiming all regard to preconceived opinion, we may array in order the facts of nature, including those of human nature and history; and may inquire to what conclusion these facts in their complexity, their harmony, and even their disorder and mystery, point. What theory of the universe will fit the facts? What hypothesis will carry us furthest in explaining its mystery? Secondly, we may assume a less imposing attitude,—the historical and judicial. We may inquire by what evidence, supposing God to exist, His existence could be certified to us; and we may examine how far such evidence is actually forthcoming, and what are the grounds on which, in point of fact, our faith rests.

The first method has an air of philosophic impartiality and scientific breadth eminently attractive to many minds. The second, less imposing, is preferable on



the ground of honesty and reality. For no man can reduce himself to pure intellect; and if he could, he would be thereby not qualified, but disqualified, for understanding any question in which the conscience, affections, emotions, and will are profoundly interested. In regard to such a question, it is in pretence only, not in reality, that we can divest ourselves of intellectual bias, prejudices of feeling, instincts, or habits which have become instincts. When any one attempts to perform this unnatural feat one of two things is apt to happen: either he simply deceives himself, and his prejudices acquire double force by his mistaking them for impartial judgments; or, in the violent strain put upon his mind, its balance is dislocated, and he acquires a repugnance to his former views proportioned to his previous attachment; repugnance and attachment being possibly alike unreasonable. What, then, is the course to be taken by a thinker at once earnest and honest? First, not to overrate his own power of impartial judgment. Secondly, not to make the fatal mistake of regarding a practical and moral question as if it were purely intellectual. Thirdly, not to attempt to divest himself by an effort of will of his present habitual convictions, nor even hastily to conclude them false, should he discover that he has held them on insufficient grounds, until he has examined on what other grounds he can or ought to hold them; but to turn upon them the searching light of full and fair inquiry. If they stand the test,—good. If they fade and vanish,—better the daylight of truth than all the many-coloured splendours of fiction. Only let us remember that cold grey daylight means imperfect light hindered by a dense atmosphere: cloudless light means warm sunshine and blue sky.

## III.

Before entering on the examination of the evidence on which faith rests, it is well to face two objections which sooner or later are sure to confront us, denying our right of way in this inquiry. Practically, the two coalesce ; but the difficulty is presented in one case in a metaphysical, in the other in an empirical or physical, form.

In deliberative assemblies when it is proposed to vote on any question, an expedient is sometimes resorted to for shelving the matter in debate by raising what is termed 'the previous question ;' that is, the question whether any vote at all shall be taken. In like manner, when a cause is to be argued before any tribunal, a previous question may be raised as to the competence of the court to try it. A corresponding attempt is made by writers of undoubted power and acuteness to out-flank the great theistic argument by maintaining either that its central thesis is incapable of being rationally affirmed, or, at least, that the human intellect is incompetent to pass judgment upon it. The statement that "the universe is the work of an Infinite Mind" conveys, according to these writers, no intelligible meaning. 'Mind' and 'infinite' are incongruous conceptions. You may put the words together, as you might talk of a globular cube or a four-sided triangle ; but they convey no real idea. "We know our own mind," say these objectors, "by consciousness ; the minds of others by observation" (it ought to be added, by sympathy and imagination) ; "but beyond these strict limits the name 'mind' has for us no meaning. If we allow that the lower animals have minds, these must be still more limited than our own. Further, their minds, such as

they are, appear to resemble ours in proportion as they possess a material organisation analogous to our own. Of mind, apart from brain, or some modification of nervous matter doing duty as brain, we know nothing. Consciousness gives us nothing but a series of states, traceable more or less directly to impressions on our nervous system; observation, nothing but mental phenomena inseparable from organised matter.”

Thus, in its metaphysical form, the objection asserts that an Infinite Mind is a contradiction; in its empirical form, that Mind, apart from material organisation, is a nonentity.

In examining the first form of the objection solely with reference to our main inquiry we must guard against needlessly entangling ourselves in a wilderness of metaphysics. On one side are the cloudy heights of speculation, to which those philosophers of France and Germany beckon us who maintain that the Absolute and the Infinite form the supreme object of human knowledge. On the other hand are the icy slopes of logic, down which our British metaphysicians would precipitate us into sheer ignorance, with the Absolute and the Unconditioned as a mill-stone round our necks, unless we are content to be shut up in Plato's cave among the shows and shadows of unknowable realities. Let us see if there be not a practicable path between these formidable alternatives,—narrow, perhaps, but plain and firm.

We may at once disembarass ourselves of those formidable terms—‘absolute’ and ‘unconditioned.’ These names simply stand for mental abstractions; attributes which denote no substantial reality, but simply the mind's way of looking at things. And their connota-

tion is rarefied to so high a degree of tenuity—it is such a bare abstraction—that they denote nothing. Their whole meaning is contained in their logical definition. Unless accurately defined, or used in a context which defines them, they are meaningless. So far from forming either the crowning height of knowledge or the impassable boundary of ignorance, when their definition is known there is no more to know about them. “You mistake,” the philosopher may reply; “we speak not of bare attributes, generalised and abstracted by the intellect, but of absolute Being; unconditioned Existence.” But this is to reduce the terms in question to mere attributes of attributes. For what is being or existence? Existence has no meaning apart from something which exists. These words simply express the most abstract generalisation, the *summum genus*, or top class, under which the mind comprehends all reality—powers, changes, and experiences of all kinds; from the feeling or thought which flashes on the mirror of consciousness and is gone, to the unchanging elementary atoms; from the vibration of a molecule to the eternal thought and will of Deity. An atom exists as much as a world; and whether its existence is absolute and unconditioned depends on the meaning we are pleased to assign to those terms.<sup>1</sup>

The case is very different when we come to speak of ‘the infinite,’ or of ‘infinity.’ Like ‘absolute’ and ‘unconditioned,’ ‘infinite’ expresses an abstract attribute; but with this important difference, that it possesses

<sup>1</sup> When Sir W. Hamilton says that “we cannot know, we cannot think a thing except under the attribute of existence,” I venture to think (with sincere reverence for his surpassing subtilty as well as learning) that, as philosophers are wont to do, he is putting system in the place of fact. Being or existence, it appears to me, is not a law, but a product, of thought.

a meaning for the imagination as well as the reason. It is formed, not by generalisation from a multiplicity of objects, but by simple abstraction from a single object, and is then metaphorically applied to other objects. Primarily and properly, 'finite' and 'infinite' apply to that which alone admits of actual measurable bounds, and therefore of being thought of as boundless; namely, space. And we cannot but think of space as boundless, unlimited, extending without cease in all directions— infinite. Hence the term is metaphorically transferred to whatever can be thought of as limited, or exempt from limits; as time, number, degree, quality. The metaphor (like many others) is so natural and inevitable that the fact of its being a metaphor is constantly overlooked.<sup>1</sup>

When, therefore, we assert that God is infinite, we mean,—first, literally, that God is present wherever space extends; secondly, figuratively, that every attribute which can be thought of as limited (that is, which admits of degrees) is possessed by God in perfection which has no limits; the word limit being used in a varying sense according to the nature of each attribute.

<sup>1</sup> Locke, with his usual acuteness, has noticed this figurative nature of the idea of infinity. But he is at fault, as I think, in considering the notion as primarily applicable to duration and number, as well as to space; and even as chiefly derived from number. Whereas number is not an entity which can be measured, but the ideal conception whereby we measure all measurable objects; and time can be bounded in idea only, not like space by any fixed permanent limits. Locke's chapter on "Infinity" contains much that is just, clear, and admirable; especially his description of our idea of infinity as "an endless, growing idea," "a growing, fugitive idea." But in his endeavour to prove that it is not a positive idea he confounds our imagination of some large amount of space with our judgment that space extends every way without limit; which latter is our IDEA, strictly so-called, of its infinitude.

Thus, for example, that His power is an inexhaustible reservoir of force equal to all possible demands ; that nothing, past, present, or future, can escape His knowledge ; that His wisdom is unerring, whether in the choice of ends or of means to affect them ; and so forth of the rest.

All these phrases, it may be noticed, like the word 'infinite' itself, are negative. It by no means follows that our idea of infinity is a negative idea, like that expressed by 'absence,' 'impossibility,' 'inanity.' Negative forms of speech and thought are continually employed to express positive ideas. 'Discord,' 'disunion,' 'anarchy,' have a very positive meaning. Our idea of 'happiness' can scarcely go beyond the declaration that there shall be 'no more sorrow.' 'Sinlessness' is a negative idea ; but to pronounce any human being sinless is to pass a positive judgment carrying immense consequences. 'Unlimited credit' is a negative phrase ; but let a man be assured of it and he will easily interpret it into the positive expectation that his bills and cheques will be honoured in any number and to any amount. 'Unlimited (or, as it is often styled, 'absolute') power' signifies power in actual exercise on such a scale that if there were any limit it must meet it, and be checked thereby. In like manner boundless, unlimited, or infinite space implies that from any point in the universe, no matter how distant from our present place, we might (had we the power) traverse space in any direction, at any speed, for any time, and should meet with no limit. This appears to me, I confess, a positive idea, if any idea can be so styled.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am glad to support myself with the authority of one of the most vigorous and subtil philosophic minds among living Englishmen. Dr.

True, it is not an adequate or complete idea. This we may at once admit. To suppose an adequate or comprehensive idea of infinity in any but an infinite mind would be an absurdity. It is a constructive, not a comprehensive idea. Imagination toils in vain to represent it, for the more we expand our horizon the vaster grows the outlying circle. We symbolise it by contradictions; it is summitless height, bottomless depth, the sum of endless addition, a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere. Yet all these negative phrases and contradictory symbols stand for one positively intelligible judgment or belief: to wit, that the reality we conceive as infinite—be it space, duration, power, wisdom, goodness, or aught else—is good for any draughts that can be made upon it, and still holds in reserve an inexhaustible fund which no demand can lessen. *This judgment*, not any representation of imagination, is our true IDEA OF THE INFINITE. And this is evidently a positive judgment. Our idea of infinitude is, therefore, positive.

Sir William Hamilton contends that “this endless growing idea” (as Locke calls it), whose reality and positive value he does not contest, is not the idea of the infinite at all, but of the indefinite, “than which no two notions can be more opposed.” I confess myself unable to see the justness of this criticism. That is indefinite which has, or may have, a limit, but whose limit cannot be ascertained. That is infinite which has not only no assignable but no real limit. And if my idea of its existence or reality be a positive idea, surely the belief

Martineau writes:—“We must say we cannot even understand what thinkers so accomplished as Sir W. Hamilton mean when they talk of ‘infinite’ and ‘infinitesimal’ as purely negative ideas, implying only failure to think.” (*Essays*, vol. i. p. 286.)

that this existence is illimitable is also a positive idea. At all events, there is no need for our present purpose to refine this discussion into the wire-drawing of verbal controversy. For this idea of the infinitude of God, whether it squares with the subtilities of metaphysicians or no, is undeniably all that religion requires : to wit, the certainty that if we could traverse space with “the wings of the morning”—the speed of light—for ages without end, God’s presence would still encompass and await us ; that if we had come into being millions multiplied by countless millions of ages ago we should have been no nearer any beginning of His existence, even as the lapse of time brings us no nearer to any end ; and, in like manner, that His wisdom, His power, His righteousness, His love, and all those attributes under which we represent to ourselves the total perfection of His being are, each in its own way, inexhaustible and illimitable.

The same line of thought shows the futility of an objection often urged against what is commonly but inadequately styled ‘the argument from design’—that is, the evidence furnished by creation of the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God. The objection is, that granting the universe to be the work of a Creator, it can prove only that He is very powerful, not that He is almighty ; very wise, not all-wise ; very great, not infinite. It is difficult to credit this objection with seriousness. A PRESENCE as near to us as we are to ourselves, yet equally present in those depths of space whence the light of congregated myriads of suns, blent into a faint minute light-point, must have been millions of years on its way ; POWER, which originated, maintains, and controls, WISDOM, which planned, and KNOWLEDGE, which



oversees all things, alike in those remote star-systems and in the world of which I am part—down to the very air I breathe and the thoughts I think: THESE are Infinite—the CREATIVE MIND of which these attributes can be asserted is Infinite, in the only sense in which the word has any intelligible meaning or practical value. Grant, if you please, that it is not the Infinite of metaphysics; it is the Infinite which the intellect can seize though not embrace; which inspires while it confounds the imagination; which fills the heart with unutterable awe, but with perfect peace.

The supposed unintelligibleness, then, of the doctrine that the universe is the work of an Infinite Mind does not lie in the idea of infinity. Is it to be found in the other idea—the idea of mind?

An eminent writer, whose radiant and flawless self-appreciation is equal to the crowning exploit of thinking himself at once humble and infallible, in toiling at his self-appointed task of hanging human faith and life upon nothing, has striven to give vogue to a phrase by which he hopes to make the idea of Divine Personality (or of a Personal God) ridiculous—“a magnified and non-natural man.” It has been well said that, like many other unseemly jests, this phrase loses its point if you do not laugh at it. The term “non-natural” has here no meaning; for, whether it be true or false that “in the image of God created he man;” whether there be or be not any essential points of resemblance between Divine and human nature—God’s nature is as natural to God as man’s to man. The point of the gibe, therefore, lies in the word “magnified,” and its artifice consists in this, that the phrase “magnified man” is sure to suggest not those attributes which are supposed to constitute Divine

Personality (as will, wisdom, love), but those in which none but the most stupid idolaters can suppose any resemblance between God and man. Deduct these. Recollect that "magnified" must be taken to mean exalted to illimitable or infinite perfection. The edge of the irony then recoils on the mind whose refined culture has not enabled it to perceive that there are in human nature attributes so glorious that the scale of humanity is infinitely too small for their development. There is in man, it is true, a littleness which dwarfs and cramps all that is strong and noble in him. But there is also a grandeur hard to understand except as the image in a warped and tiny mirror of a grandeur elsewhere existing, over which such limits have no sway. Man has a WILL, so weak as to be drawn aside from right by the most unworthy allurements, daunted by the most despicable difficulties, palsied with ignoble sloth; yet capable also of holding its own purpose and choice against the world. He has an INTELLECT, weak enough to be befooled by transparent fallacies and led astray at every step by prejudice and passion; yet powerful enough to measure the distances and motions of the stars, to track the invisible sound-waves and light-waves in their courses, and to win from Nature the key of empire. He has LOVE, which wastes itself among the dregs of life, or suffers selfishness to wither it at the root; but also which is able to lift him to the sublime height of self-sacrifice, and is the inexhaustible fount of the deepest and purest happiness he knows or can imagine. He has CONSCIENCE—the sense of right and wrong,—easily perverted, and which has by turns justified every crime and condemned every virtue; yet which nevertheless proclaims that right, not wrong—everlasting righteousness, not self-

willed injustice—is the imperial law of the universe. I ask, Is the scale in which these attributes are seen in man their true scale? Is it reasonable to think so? Or is there anything non-natural—that is, irrational—in the belief, nay, the certainty, that they demand, in order to realise the ideas which human nature perpetually suggests and continually disappoints, a scale of grandeur and perfection no less than infinite? Do they not assure us, as with a voice from the very depths of our being, that there must be a SUPREME WILL, irresistible, unswerving, pervading and controlling the universe; the source of all law, but a law to itself; guided unchangeably by infinite knowledge, absolute righteousness, perfect love?

These are questions which demand an answer from every one capable of understanding them, and which are not to be answered by a rhetorical trick or by a coarse jest. The answer irresistibly suggested to my own mind is, that the parrot-cry of ‘anthropomorphism,’ wearisomely reiterated, has a show indeed of philosophic depth, but little of the reality; and that the idea of the Infinite Mind is no shadow projected by human nature on the void, but a reflection of God’s own image in the soul. Yet, let us beware of falling into a trap of our own setting. The very comparison just used conveys a caution; for a reflection can give but one aspect of an object, and those rays only go to form the object which touch the mirror at certain angles. So, when we speak of God as Infinite Intelligence, Will, Love, Righteousness, the Eternal I AM, we do not mean (that is, we ought not to mean) that these or any other ideas we are capable of entertaining can adequately express Deity. When we speak of a Personal God or of Divine Person-

ality we do not mean (or ought not) that God's whole being can be thus comprehended, as a human person comprehends his entire self in the words 'I,' 'me.' There may, there must be, in the Divine Nature infinitely more than these, or any other conceptions possible to our present intellect, can represent. It not merely consists with, but belongs to, the highest form of religious faith to hold that all that we can know of God is but little compared with what remains unknown : much to be known hereafter as our own being rises and expands ; yet more, perhaps, which can never be revealed to any finite mind.<sup>1</sup>

What we do mean (or ought in my opinion to mean) is, that these conceptions of God are true *as far as they go*, and take us to the limits of our present intelligence ; and that they are *practically* true, giving us valid, though limited, knowledge. That is, that like our knowledge of nature and of one another, which is limited but valid as far as it extends—practically true—*they will work*. We mean that we can address God as a Person, and sustain personal relations of love, trust, obedience, reverence, on our part, and guidance, authority, loving-kindness, condescension, on God's part ; such as are possible only between persons. And we mean, that as nature verifies our knowledge by responding to it, our knowledge being proved valid by becoming power, so is that knowledge of God verified and proved valid which, when put in practice, becomes power to do, to feel, and to be, what otherwise we never could have achieved.

<sup>1</sup> "Si enim comprehendis, non est Deus. . . . Adtingere aliquantum mente Deum, magna beatitudo est ; comprehendere autem omnino impossibile." —*St. Augustine*, quoted by Hamilton.

## IV.

The physical, or empirical, form comes now to be considered of that primary thesis of scepticism which I have spoken of as raising 'the previous question' to our whole inquiry. This primary thesis is, that the central doctrine of Theism is irrational, because 'mind' and 'infinite' are incongruous terms ; and that therefore an Infinite Mind cannot be an object of rational belief. The metaphysical form of this objection has been examined. The physical or empirical form of it is, that mind is a function of organised matter, having no existence, as our experience assures us, apart from a living nervous system. Mind, finite or infinite, apart from body is a nonentity. This objection again meets us in two forms, higher and lower, psychological and physiological ; the one drawn from analysis of consciousness, the other from the observation of the connection between the mind and the brain.

In its higher, or psychological, form the objection may be thus stated : — Mind is nothing but a chain of states of consciousness, which states primarily originate in sensations, either of the individual himself or of his ancestors, whose 'organised experience' he inherits. "The one thing which any one knows as mind is the series of his own states of consciousness ; and if he thinks of any other mind than his own he can think of it only in terms derived from his own. If I am asked to frame a notion of mind divested of all those structural traits under which alone I am conscious of mind in myself, I cannot do it. I know nothing of thought save as carried on in ideas originally traceable to the effects wrought by objects on me." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer—*Reply to Martineau.*

This goes to the root. Admit this, and neither evolution nor any other theory is necessary to exclude the idea of Deity from the universe. But the first remark to be made is, that the statement (in appearance wonderfully simple) that "the one thing which any one knows as mind is the series of his own states of consciousness," is self-contradictory. In the words "his own" and "series" it implicitly asserts what it explicitly denies. What, or who, is "any one" who *knows* mind as a series of states of consciousness? And what constitutes these states a "series"? For a series is not a mere succession; it is a succession governed by law and forming a whole.

➤ In addition, therefore, to the series of states of consciousness we have two other elements to account for: the unifying power or principle by virtue of which it is a series, and the *knowledge* that it is a series. Both these imply an enduring self, or self-conscious mind. For no one would be insane enough to say that our states of consciousness follow one another at haphazard with no inward link of continuity. Neither will it do to say that they are continuous, as any chain of events may be continuous, by the relation of cause and consequence. For it is only to a very limited extent that our states of mind follow one another in the sequence of cause and effect. They are chiefly produced by the action and reaction of our will, reason, and sensitive faculties, on the one hand, and the outer world on the other. In which process, moreover, it is a gross error to speak of

➤ "the effects wrought by objects on me," as if the mind were simply passive: its innate force contributes at least as much to every sensation as the external force which occasions the sensation; and in a multitude of cases (as in dreams) the mind originates the sensation and invents the imaginary external object to which it refers it.

If any proof be needed that the relation of cause and effect is not that unifying principle in virtue of which my states of consciousness are one series, which I know to be mine ; and yours, in like manner, a separate series which you know to be yours ; it will be supplied by the analysis of any suitable specimen of ordinary experience. For example, I am writing at my desk, busily constructing a consecutive train of thought. The door opens. An old friend enters whom I have not seen for years. We walk out, and talk for an hour under the trees about old times. He departs. I resume my train of thought just where it was broken off. Not a single link connects it with those memories of the past, unrevived for years, with which the last hour has been filled. But it will be inseparably associated with them for the future. Why, and how ? Not by anything in the states of consciousness themselves, but simply because they were MY states of consciousness, accruing to me consecutively in circumstances which, as we are incorrectly wont to say, *imprint themselves* on the memory ; but, to speak more justly, which memory firmly retains. To speak of circumstances imprinting or impressing themselves is a useful and intelligible metaphor ; but taken literally it is nonsense. The mind does it all. I am myself the living unity, the cohesive force, by which the fleeting experiences of each instant are linked into a series.

Still, it will be urged, this is at bottom nothing but the 'association of ideas.' A chain needs no cement or ligature to make it a chain—simply the fact that each link takes hold of its fellows at either end. Yes ; but how comes it to do so ? By the force of the skilful hand which welded link after link in that position, without which ten thousand links would never make a yard of

chain. And when we speak of the force and skill of the workman's hand we really mean his thought, purpose, and will. The iron cable that holds the ship at anchor is as truly bound together by the force of thought—the purpose of the man who invented it and the intelligence and will of the workmen who forged it—as a chain of reasoning. What is 'association of ideas'? What associates them? Nothing can be more empty verbiage, howsoever it may pass current for philosophy, than to speak as though an idea (whatever that may mean) could have in itself any power to associate or league itself with any other idea. There must be a workman to forge the chain, a mind to associate ideas, an abiding conscious self to unify and appropriate experience; a permanent personality to recognise and accredit the representations of memory, distinguishing them from those of imagination with an intuition which is the last appeal in every practical affair of life, and affirming, with a certainty which can neither be impugned nor augmented —“That is MY experience.”

This fact, namely, that the mind is not a mere string of experiences, but a conscious unit, an abiding self, the cause, not the offspring, of its own experience, is so plain to ordinary common sense that to many it may seem lost time and labour to spend a sentence in refuting what is so obviously false. Only the artificial refinements of philosophy and necessities of system could ever lead any one to doubt it. If any one chooses, with ostrich-like placidity, to bury his head in the bush of his own system, admitting no facts but those which it has room for, his position is impregnable. But a philosopher in this posture does not constitute a landmark of progress, still less a barrier of thought.



The assertion, then, that belief in an Infinite Mind is irrational, because we know mind only as we find it in ourselves, and find it in ourselves only as a series of sense-originated experiences, appears on calm scrutiny to be simply the *dictum* of a peculiar school of philosophy, neither explaining the facts as a theory nor deduced from them as a conclusion. On the other hand, when we consider the difference between the mind of an infant and that of a man, the continued development of a powerful and well-trained intellect long after the bodily organisation has felt the touch of incipient decay, and the amazing interval separating a dull, narrow, obstinately conceited mind from a mind of the highest genius, we can perceive no barrier to the indefinite expansion of mind. Nothing is easier, nothing apparently more rational, than to conceive the existence of numberless grades of mind as far exalted above the present highest pitch of humanity, and some of those grades above others, as the mind of Bacon or Aristotle soars above that of an untrained boor or an untamed savage ; and yet again of a Parent Mind compared with whom these differences shrink to minute ripples on the ocean of conscious life, and of whom alone it can be said that " His understanding is infinite."

" Easy enough," the objector will reply, " and, as far as the data of consciousness go, not irrational, to imagine all this. But science must be guided not by imagination, but by facts ; and the facts are that we know mind only in connection with nervous organisation, —with brain in man, in the elephant, the dog, the beaver, and all other vertebrate animals, and with something which takes the place of brain in the ant, the bee, and every creature which displays even the rudiments of

mind. According to the development and health of the organisation is the power and sanity of the mind. Every mental act is accompanied and conditioned by change and waste of nerve tissue. A slightly morbid state of brain can destroy reason without impairing consciousness. An injury of another sort—as a stunning blow, an attack of apoplexy, or the simple withdrawal of blood in a fainting fit — may completely suspend consciousness. Finally, when the organism dies, all manifestation of mind instantly ceases. Disembodied mind is therefore as inconceivable as sensation without sense-organs, sight without a lens to focus the rays and a retina to receive the picture, hearing without an ear to catch the sound-waves, or motion without matter to be moved and mechanical force to move it. It is no question of finite or infinite. It is not a question on which consciousness is competent to judge. It is a question of the existence of consciousness, will, reason, or mind in any shape apart from highly and specially organised living matter. It is a question of possibility ; and science pronounces it impossible. ‘Mind is known only as a set of attributes belonging to animals.’”

This is the physical objection, stated as tersely and forcibly as I know how to put it. It is capable, of course, of being expanded into volumes by the explanation of details, the record of experiments and observations, and the narration of illustrative examples. An argument has an immense advantage by being displayed on this large scale, and as it were pictorially presented. It fills and impresses the imagination. It gains the prestige of wide induction. When a large number of facts, highly important and graphically described, are confidently presented as

evidence for a given conclusion, it is difficult to resist the feeling that though some may be inconclusive, yet so large a mass of evidence must have considerable weight. We need to remind ourselves that no accumulation of facts can establish an irrelevant conclusion. And just because for the purpose of instruction and impression it is desirable to have an argument stated and illustrated at length, for the purpose of testing its truth it is useful to pack it in the smallest compass consistent with justice.

It is well first to consider to what extent modern science has really thrown light upon the connection between mind and material organisation. That the soul has no existence apart from the body is no novel doctrine. That there is a close connection between the brain and thought ; that, for example, a violent blow suspends consciousness ; that an injury to the head may produce idiocy or loss of memory ; that alcohol and other drugs have a peculiar effect at once on the brain and on the mind, producing various kinds of insanity ; and, finally, 'that when the brains are out the man will die,' and all manifestation of mind as far as human observers are concerned instantaneously cease : all this must have been matter of very early experience. Yet it has been justly held that all this constitutes no decisive proof that the conscious mind has itself perished, and may not exist independently of the bodily machinery through which it conversed with outward nature and with other minds. What scientific research has accomplished is, in the first place, to localise and specialise the points of connection between consciousness and organisation. By means of exquisitely delicate anatomy and ingenious experiment it has demonstrated

the unity of the nervous system as distinguished from the other bodily tissues ; the double office of the nerves, afferent and efferent, in their distinct sets of nerves of sensation and nerves of volition, and the fact that they act as conductors of what — for want of more precise knowledge—is termed “nerve force.” It has even been made probable that it is the surface of the brain which is concerned in the ultimate meeting of nerve-action and consciousness. So that the idea is suggested that, in place of its being true that “this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close us in,” consciousness rather broods like a cloud of fire over its fleshly tabernacle, ready at a moment’s warning to take flight. In a word, what was formerly known roughly and in the gross, science has defined in such precise and multiplied detail as to give it a wholly new intellectual value, so that in our general knowledge of human nature the sphere of consciousness, though it cannot be actually lessened, bears a wonderfully diminished proportion to the sphere of observation.

In like manner science has brought from twilight into sunlight the long series of fine gradations by which the glimmering consciousness of creatures like star-fish or sea anemones rises to the highly developed consciousness of the dog or the elephant, where it is impossible at any given point to insert the knife-edge of a sharp discrimination ; while, nevertheless, the interval from the star-fish to the well-trained collie, who understands his master’s speech and all but talks himself, seems far greater than from the dog to the savage, or even to civilised man. Science, too, not content with ascertaining and arranging these facts, has set us upon the track of asking with invincible pertinacity what they

mean. The old question comes with new point and power,—“Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

Again, modern science is revealing to us a wholly new conception of the material universe. In place of a universe of inert matter, acted upon by forces utterly distinct from itself, between which and life, mind, or spirit, the distinction seemed as broad and impassable as obvious, our imagination now contemplates a universe of sleepless force running an eternal round of incessant transformation. Impenetrability, so confidently assumed as a self-evident primary property of matter, dwelling in every smallest particle as in an impregnable citadel, is seen to be an idol of our imagination. The solid-seeming rock is beheld as a flexible and elastic collection of molecules, formed out of simple atoms in millions numberless beyond all arithmetic, tied together by cohesive and chemic force, yet incessantly agitated by inconceivably rapid movements; vibrating thousands of times in a second at a child's shout or a bird's song; millions of millions of times under the warm kiss of the sunbeam or the blows of a summer shower, transformed as it dashes on the rock into heat. Every one of these simple primary atoms, stolidly inert when none but its own kind are present, possesses within itself an inscrutable treasure of powerful affinities and active properties awaiting the presence of unlike atoms to call them forth in turn. Every compound molecule framed of simple atoms becomes the starting-point for more complex combinations in endless multiplication, some so stable that nothing dissolves their union but the victorious force of heat, some so unstable that a touch explodes them,

and the very weakness of their cohesive tie becomes a tremendous destructive power. And with the formation of each new compound, qualities come to light of which no previous knowledge of its constituent elements would have given the faintest warning.

This intensely active universe, in which each atom emerges from the longest series of transformations precisely what it was at first, its store of properties unchanged and undiminished, is pervaded by a mighty network of forces ; some acting at short distances, and conditioned by special forms of matter, as electricity and magnetism ; others, as light and gravitation, acting with unimpaired and invariable virtue through the remotest ranges of space and time ; yet with wondrous differences ; light bending at every instant of its passage through the air, and rebounding from every surface on which it falls ; while gravitation, the very type of immutable law, swerves not from the ideally perfect straight line, finds all bodies alike permeable, and takes no note of any of their differences save only of the ultimate quantity of matter in their mass.

Lastly, since we have not yet learned to conceive of pure force or absolute motion without some medium, imagination fills the universe (matter and space alike) with a subtil ether bearing the same relation to the pulsations of light as the atmosphere to waves of sound.

In view of this miraculous panorama and of these three classes of facts,—to wit, the connection between mental action and nerve force ; the insensible gradations of life and consciousness from their lowest to their highest manifestations ; and the intense activity compounded of the special forces latent in every atom and the universal forces pervading space ; the question is asked—in such

a tone as if it were the very voice of Science that speaks —“Why should we hesitate to say that the universe is not dead, but alive ; that the forces, never replenished, never exhausted, with which every atom is instinct, are vital forces ? Why should we fence off, by an arbitrary barrier, life from those chemic, electric, thermal, photal, and nervous forces, apart from which no scintillation of its existence twinkles within the field of our knowledge ? Or, again, Why separate consciousness from other kinds of vital activity, or intellect from other kinds of consciousness ? What hinders our regarding mind as the crowning and most complex result of the interworking of all these natural forces on which its manifestation —may we not therefore say its existence ?—depends ?”

Our answer ought to be clearly and warily given, for everything hangs upon it. And, first, the question, What hinders ? always suggests the reply, What compels ? The point to be proved is, that mind, being “known only as a set of attributes of animals,” can have no existence where the animal — the living organism — is not. If the facts prove this conclusion, it must be either by direct evidence, or by analogy, or because this explanation of the facts is the only one possible, and carries with it its own proof. Certainly, the facts do not prove the conclusion directly. What they prove is, that bodily organisation is the condition of the development of consciousness in the forms in which we actually find it in men and the lower animals ; and the means by which such consciousness is externally manifested and holds relation with its material surroundings. When the nerve force ceases to act, all manifestation of the presence of mind ceases, as much in Milton or in Shakespeare as in a beetle or an oyster. As far as all intercourse

with other minds through their senses is concerned, in that very moment 'his thoughts perish.' But, then, we knew this before. Science has not added to its proof, for it was absolutely certain already. While the mind is inseparable from the body it is conditioned by the body. The proof should begin, not end, here. What needs proving is, that the conscious mind does not and cannot still exist apart from the organisation through which it was developed and manifested. Conditions of development are one thing ; the germ to be developed is another: The heat which hatches the egg is not the egg, and has no voice in deciding whether the egg shall develop into a wren or a vulture. The scaffolding is not the building, though without it the building had never been. Conditions of manifestation are one thing, existence is another thing. The instruments of the orchestra are not the music. The stage is not the drama. Without those, the musician's or the poet's ideas could not have manifested themselves, and would never even have come into existence ; but those will perish, these are immortal. All that science has done, or can do, in this matter, is learnedly to demonstrate our ignorance. We are just where we were. As to all appearance the mind begins with the body, so to all appearance it ends with it. But appearance and reality are often at strange odds. If disembodied mind exist, if the unseen inhabitant survive its earthly tabernacle, this must in the very nature of things be proved, if proved at all, by other than sensible evidence. Supposing it true, science cannot prove it. Therefore, science cannot disprove it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> That consciousness can be suspended (by a blow, an electric shock, a swoon, an epileptic fit) proves nothing ; for the complete self survives, its continuity is unbroken. The brain, it may be said, constitutes this continuity : but this assumption is the very point to be proved.



I am, of course, aware that to many acute minds this admission will appear fatal. The temper of our age is such as to lead a large number of thoughtful persons to say, "We decline to believe anything which cannot be scientifically proved." At this point argument stops. So much the worse for them. Better for a man to know nothing of science than to fall into that morbid intellectualism which mistakes science for the whole of knowledge. To be consistent such a man should distrust his own memory and personal identity, for neither of these can be scientifically proved.

Secondly, the argument holds no better as an argument from analogy. Doubtless many beautiful and useful analogies may be traced between the working of physical forces and the working of mind; but they are analogies of imagination, and not of reasoning. They belong to the symbolism of Nature, not to its construction. One unanswerable objection, it seems to me, forbids our regarding the mind-force (so to call it) as a transformation, or complex result, of physical forces. Physical forces are impersonal and universal. Mind is personal and individual. Motion and attraction are identical in Jupiter and in a school-boy's marble. The vibrations of light are the same in a reading-lamp and in the Pleiades. A charged Leyden jar has precisely the same properties to-day as a hundred years ago—in London as in Honolulu. The grey matter of the brain is composed of precisely the same elements in one man as in another. Let us suppose it proved that the force which acts along the nerves, both of sensation and of volition, is essentially identical with electricity. Then up to the very furthest point to which science can lead us, the very frontier of consciousness—where the final

vibration of the series set going by the light-waves in the eye, or by the sound-waves in the ear, or by the action of any other sense, emerges into conscious sensation and is judged of by the intellect ; the point whence issue the mandates of the will to the muscles ; all is general, impersonal, unswerving, subject to universal law. At that point, within that frontier, all is changed. Universal laws, no doubt, still to some extent rule, but of a kind utterly and irreconcilably unlike any laws to which physical forces are subject. To a great extent each mind has its own laws, often arbitrary, irrational, fantastic, immoral, mischievous ; and not seldom stubborn and despotic exactly in proportion as they vary from those which well-regulated minds obey. Many men, many minds. One man's meat is another man's poison. The scents, savours, sounds, sights, feelings, which to one are rapture, to another are torture, and to a third slightly agreeable, displeasing, or indifferent, as the case may be. What a man believes to-day he rejected yesterday ; what he chooses to-day he will repent of to-morrow : the facts meanwhile remaining unaltered. All things, moreover, within the sphere of the mind are incommensurable. There is no equivalent of one feeling in another ; of slow satisfaction in quick pleasure ; of rapid agony in life-long grief ; of the force of persuasion as measured against the force of argument. There are universal laws of logic ; but they show how all reasoning *ought* to be conducted, not how any one person actually argues. There are universal laws of justice ; but while the conscience assents to them the will disobeys them. There is, in fine, no such thing as *Mind*, in the sense in which there is light, gravitation, electric or magnetic force. There are minds ; and each mind is a world of its own.

Only one answer is conceivable, namely, that the individualising principle is supplied by minute yet decisive differences in organisation. The body is the man, different from all other men. The brain, with its system of nerves, is that abiding, self-conscious unity, that living self, which links together successive states of consciousness. And as those wonderfully minute differences which produce (for example) near-sightedness or colour-blindness, or tendency to gout, may be not only permanent, but hereditary, so the nervous organisation may register the experience both of the individual and of generations past, and thus determine personal character. On this theory the doctrine we are considering may claim credence on the third of the three grounds before supposed ; to wit, that although it cannot be proved by direct evidence or by analogy, it yet suggests so plain and probable an explanation of the facts as to shine by its own light. Science, we are told, rejects mysteries. By what right it does so we are not told ; for Nature is full of mysteries, and the duty of science is, not to pick and choose, but to accept all the facts of Nature as they are. Let us, however, examine whether this non-mysterious explanation really explains anything. The problem is—given organised matter and transmuted force, to account for mind. What is meant by organisation ? A certain substance—that is, a collection of molecules, each one the counterpart of its companions, whose chemical composition is known—arranged in a certain shape ; the configuration of the brain and nerves being as essential as their composition to life and consciousness. This organisation is not like a machine or engine made by man, a stable mechanism slowly wearing out. The innumerable millions of molecules composing it are

incessantly being formed from the blood as living matter, and vanishing as dead matter from the system ; the entire nervous mass, we are told, changing some eight times in a year. To this apparatus for producing consciousness we have to add vibrations at the rate of as many millions of millions per second as may be necessary, and currents or discharges of nerve force apparently akin to, if not identical with, electricity. These streams or shocks of nervous force accompany every act of sensation and of muscular volition ; and also, it is assumed, every act of thought—that is to say, reasoning, imagination, or memory, as well as every mental volition and emotion. As the office of the nervous and cerebral molecules is to transmit or respond to vibrations, we must suppose them so framed as to act with the utmost freedom consistent with the cohesion of a soft pulpy substance. Just as for every word we utter there is a distinct configuration of air vibrations, so for every thought, feeling, and volition, we are to suppose a distinct configuration of cerebral vibrations, not forgetting that modifications of mind are infinitely more varied, delicate, and complex than those of sound. As science is drawing here upon imagination, let her have unlimited credit. As the substance of the brain and nerves seems but ill-fitted for these inconceivably rapid vibrations, we may conjecture that the true vibrating medium may be that all-pervading ether through which the undulations of light and heat—why not those producing other sensations?—are assumed to travel. The office of the brain-molecules, then, may be simply to localise these vibrations, as the telegraph wire localises the electric current, or the lens the rays of light which it brings to a focus.

A telegraph wire which could record in its molecular

structure every message it transmits, or a lens which could store up in its substance (without loss of transparency) a picture of every object viewed through it, would certainly be a miraculous instrument. Yet no less a task is laid upon the mobile molecules, momentarily renewed, momentarily perishing, of the brain. Without dulling their responsiveness to each new impression, they have to register, either by fixed forms or by permanent habits of motion,—for what other means have they?—the fleeting impressions of the past, and to carry the vast and ever-growing burden of the stores of memory. An old man's brain, for example, already growing stiff and dull to the impressions of to-day, may suddenly reproduce with vividness a scene which for fifty years has not flashed into the light of remembrance, originally made up of impressions none of which lasted more than a few seconds. Scientific physiologists perpetually talk of "*traces in the brain*," as if they were quite as easy to conceive as the traces of the pen on an old manuscript (where the original molecules remain in *statu quo*); and are bold enough to illustrate their possibility by comparison with the scar of a wound received in childhood, which remains visible in old age, often though the tissue has been renewed during the lapse of years. Suppose, instead of a single wound, which took days or weeks in healing, the scar had to record a thousand wounds, each received and healed in a few moments, each obliterating its predecessor, yet all without confusion recorded by the present configuration of the skin; the comparison would be a little—and but a little—more just. But who does not see that as it approached justness it would be fatal to the purpose for which it is used?

This, in briefest outline, is what we are asked to believe

as a simple, scientific, non-mysterious explanation of the existence and activity of human minds. Feeling, Reason, Will, Poetry, Music, Painting, Architecture, Politics, Manufactures, Law, Morality, Religion, Science itself, are all explained by the vibration of molecules under the action of nerve currents. My objection to this explanation is, not that it is purely imaginary (for that it could not help being), but that it explains nothing, and is, when pressed fairly home to its exact meaning, totally unintelligible. Professing to do away with mystery by denying the existence of individual minds, distinct non-material centres of consciousness and will, it sets us face to face with two mysteries, than which none can be more stupendous or inscrutable. First, how can multitudinous atoms, obeying universal forces, produce a personal unity? Secondly, how can vibrations, whether of molecules or of ether, by any degree of rapidity and complication, become consciousness?

I conclude, then, that the attempt to forbid in the name of Science as illegitimate the conception of a SUPREME MIND distinct from the universe, as well as of human minds capable of surviving the wreck of their fleshly organisms, is as unauthorised as it is audacious. Science is queen of a splendid realm. But when her courtiers invade provinces she was not born to rule they do but expose her rightful claims to discredit. Her domain lies on the coast of our conscious being, where the spray of the great encircling ocean of outward existence dashes on it. Each human consciousness is an islet in the boundless expanse. Without the waves it would not be an island, but a mountain-top. But, also, without the shore there would be no breaking waves, no

rock-beaten foam and spray. Each limits the other. The island is not produced from the waters nor borne on their bosom. It encloses a central region, where, if Science come at all, it must be not to bear sway, but to learn the limits of her power. Her scalpel and microscope, test-tube and balance, have no vocation there. From the volcanic heart of this central region, from our innermost consciousness, a voice is heard, clothed with native authority, which asks no patent from science:—“I feel. I think. I will. I am!” And as we listen to this inner voice, in which our mind bears witness to itself, do we not hear in it the faint echo of a more awful voice, the voice of the Supreme Mind, the Infinite Consciousness?—“I AM THAT I AM.” “I am JEHOVAH, that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself ; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. I am JEHOVAH, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness. . . . I, JEHOVAH, do all these things.”





LECTURE III.

*THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE.*



## LECTURE III.

### THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE.

NO reasonable person can deny that the question, *Does God exist?* is the most momentous question mankind can ask. For by this name GOD we understand an Infinite Mind, everywhere present, the source and foundation of all other existence, possessed of all possible power, wisdom, and excellence. Our personal relations to Him must needs be more close and important than to any other being; “for in Him” we must “live and move and have our being.” He must be at once our Parent, our Ruler, and the Sovereign Owner of the universe. If real, His being must be the greatest of all realities; if knowable, the knowledge of Him must be the highest of all truth.

It is therefore reasonable to expect the evidence of God’s existence to be clear, abundant, and convincing. There may be reasons—moral reasons, for no other are conceivable—why this evidence should not be as overpowering as that by which the existence of our fellow-men and of the material world forces itself upon our belief. But we should expect it to be amply satisfactory, and even irresistible, to all who are willing reverently to study it and honestly to weigh it. To suppose that God exists, and yet is undiscoverable and unknowable by us, His creatures and children, is either to contradict His

supposed wisdom and goodness, or else to cast an intolerable slur and disgrace upon human intellect. All our prized and vaunted knowledge may justly be accounted worthless and illusory, if this greatest of all facts can lie concealed behind all other facts, everywhere encompassing us yet impenetrably veiled from us.

The question therefore arises,—Assuming that God exists, what possible kinds of evidence are there by which the human mind may be informed and assured of this highest of truths?

It is conceivable, in the first place, that this knowledge might be imparted to each mind separately by an intuition resembling that by which we recognise the representations of memory, and are assured of their truth with a conviction that precludes doubt. Such an intuition would leave neither need nor room for any other evidence. Or, secondly, sensible phenomena might be provided which should as irresistibly assure us of the existence and presence of God, as we are assured of those of our fellow-men by their forms, features, movements, and voices. Our nature, which bears such strong marks of a more or less dislocated and morbid condition, may possibly have been once endowed with an intuitive faculty now dormant, or have enjoyed manifestations now withdrawn. It might seem not unreasonable to expect that one or both of these kinds of evidence should have been vouchsafed to us. The Christian belief is that they will be enjoyed hereafter. Without assuming that we can know all the reasons why such intuitions or manifestations are denied us, any presumption thence suggested against the wisdom or goodness of God is fully met by the supposition that the over-bearing weight and splendour of such evidence would have destroyed or imperilled the moral

value of religion. Faith would have been superseded by intellect; the position of religion as a social power would have been completely altered, and the conditions of moral discipline deranged. That is to say, this must have been the result if such intuitive certainty or irresistible sensible impressions had formed part of the experience of every human being. But it must not be overlooked that the very idea of Revelation, as we find it both in the Hebrew and in the Christian Scriptures, turns upon the asserted fact that to certain selected individuals have been granted both inward intuitions and sensible manifestations, which conveyed to them a perception of God's being and presence as clear and convincing as we have of those of our fellow-men. A whole nation is asserted in its contemporary national records to have received such a manifestation at Mount Sinai. But the persons thus favoured were already believers in the Divine existence. These instances, supposing their historic reality admitted, illustrate by contrast the absence of any such direct knowledge among mankind at large.

ONE there has been living as man among men, who claimed to possess direct and complete knowledge of God, and promised to impart a convincing and satisfactory knowledge to all His sincere disciples. His teaching descends to us along the ordinary channels of historic testimony. But the number and character of those who profess to have tested His teaching and verified His promise in their own experience supply a mass of experimental testimony which deserves from candid sceptics more careful examination than it has hitherto received.

Ambitious but unsuccessful attempts have been made to establish the fact of the Divine existence by strict demonstration. Demonstrative reasoning can carry us

but a little way in this great argument, for the simple reason that the stream of deduction cannot possibly rise above the fountain from which it is drawn. Deduction can put us in possession of no more knowledge than is virtually involved in our knowledge of the premises from which it starts. It is like the key of a casket, giving us command of a treasure which was ours already, but which we could neither see nor use. If the existence and attributes of God be demonstrable by deductive reasoning, it must be from truths yet wider and more certain. These can only be those necessary truths or primary beliefs which lie at the very foundation and fountain-head of our knowledge ; such as our intuitions of time and space, and belief of their infinitude ; our belief in the necessity of a cause for every event, and a substance underlying every phenomenon ; our conviction of our own existence and personal identity, and of the existence of surrounding objects and persons ; our intuition of the opposition between right and wrong—the obligation to do right and the guilt of doing wrong. Now our belief in God lies so close to the region of these primary beliefs or intuitions, and ranks so equal with them in dignity and importance, that it has been often classed among them. Were it rightly so classed, it would neither require nor admit demonstration. We have already conceded that this is not the case ; but the interval separating this, the sublimest belief of which we are capable, from primary or necessary beliefs, is so narrow that it is but a short step for scepticism to take from the one to the other. To most intelligent persons the axiom that “ God exists ” wears so much the character of a first principle that the proof of it from other admitted axioms (such as that every change implies a cause and every contingent existence an absolute existence) is

incapable of impressing them with any increased certainty.<sup>1</sup> Philosophers, on the other hand, have stepped across the interval, and have dragged even necessary truths within the arctic circle of doubt.

Necessary truths or primary beliefs are simply those beliefs which the constitution of our minds compels us to hold, and the constitution of the world we live in compels us to act upon. From this second character of our primary beliefs—their conformity with nature—it comes to pass that as they lie at the basis of all our knowledge, so all our experience is one continued verification of them. Hence, it is not difficult to represent them, as Hume and the philosophers who follow in his wake have done, as mere generalisations from experience, and their certainty as consisting simply in an unbroken association of ideas; whereas this is to invert the pyramid of our knowledge, mistaking for results of experience what are in fact its conditions. Again, Kant and the thinkers whom his system has moulded, holding by the first character of necessary beliefs—that their necessity lies in our mental constitution; but not sufficiently considering the second, that Nature by conforming to them attests their validity; have sought to restrict their empire within the realm of thought, forbidding us to argue from them to any reality external to ourselves. A wider application of this two-

<sup>1</sup> Pascal gives another reason. “Les preuves de Dieu metaphysiques sont si éloignées du raisonnement des hommes, et si impliquées, qu’elles frappent peu; et quand cela servirait à quelques uns ce ne serait que pendant l’instant qu’ils voient cette démonstration, mais une heure après, ils craignent de s’être trompés.” But he goes on to make the extraordinary assertion: “Que jamais auteur canonique ne s’est servi de la nature pour prouver Dieu;” on the manifest error of which statement Victor Cousin forcibly and justly comments. The demonstrative argument is finely handled in Howe’s *Living Temple*, chap. iii.

fold scepticism to the whole field of evidence will presently demand our notice.

If the knowledge of God be matter neither of direct intuition nor of sensible perception ; and if the proof of His existence by demonstrative reasoning, though unanswerable as far as it goes, takes us but a very little way, and wholly fails to give such a knowledge of God as can form any basis for religion—that is, faith, love, and worship ; this highest truth, if knowable by us, must be known as we know all other matters of fact not known in any of the foregoing ways : namely, by appropriate and adequate evidence.

Supposing, then, that God exists, and wills to discover Himself to us, though not by the fore-mentioned methods, what kinds of evidence are there by which this knowledge may be rendered intelligible and certain ? They appear to be the following :

I. The Supreme Being might so order our entrance upon existence that this knowledge should not be left to the chance of our discovering it ourselves, but be taught us among our earliest lessons ; and He might so frame our mental constitution that we should receive it with unquestioning faith as part of the very groundwork of our knowledge.

II. He might cause all Nature, from the stars above us to the dust under our tread, to reiterate to our riper judgment this lesson of our childhood ; filling it with proofs of His presence and agency ; some so obvious as to strike the casual eye, others recondite, disclosing themselves to patient search ; some especially indicative of His power, others of His wisdom, others of His goodness, others of His delight in order, beauty, and purity.



III. He might by rare and (so to speak) arbitrary interruptions of the ordinary course of Nature rouse men's minds to the conviction that this course is under the control of an all-powerful invisible Personal Agent ; thus reinforcing the lessons taught by Nature in her ordinary course.

IV. He might communicate the knowledge of Himself to individual minds in such a way as to leave no more room for ignorance or doubt than if their knowledge were intuitively grasped by an original faculty. And if He saw not fit to do this ordinarily, He might qualify and employ these selected minds as instructors of their fellow-men.

V. He might furnish verification of the knowledge thus communicated, either by giving predictions, and, after the lapse of years or of centuries, accomplishing them ; or by giving promises which any one might put to the test for himself, and fulfilling them.

VI. He might so order human affairs as to impress thoughtful observers with the controlling presence of an unseen mind, causing the reception of the knowledge of Himself to be attended with the greatest benefits to mankind, and the entire disbelief and rejection of it to be followed with frightful and warning consequences.

VII. Lastly, He might so constitute man's nature that he should naturally crave after this knowledge, and find his truest happiness and dignity, personal and social, in possessing and acting upon it.

In any of these ways, supposing that God exists, the knowledge of Him may be either communicated or greatly cleared and corroborated. If on examination it shall appear that, in point of fact, we are furnished with every one of these species of evidence, clearly and

abundantly, then it seems impossible to conceive of anything further being requisite in order to warrant our esteeming the knowledge of the Supreme Being the most certain, as it undeniably must be the most precious, of all the treasures of our intellect and faith.

It may, however, be objected that at all events the first method of gaining a knowledge, or rather a belief, of the existence of God supplies no real evidence for that belief. That our parents taught us when we were children to believe in God seems to some minds so far from furnishing a reason for holding fast this belief, that they account it the prime duty of a dispassionate inquirer to free himself (if he can) from the prejudices of early training, and to exercise an unbiassed judgment. Without here raising the question how far it is possible or desirable to attain a really unbiassed judgment on a point of such transcendent practical importance, we may freely admit that every mature and cultivated mind is bound to form a judgment for itself on this great question, and not to build its faith, childlike, on the faith of others. But the point to be considered is this, that while the actual source from which, in fact, we derive our first belief in God is not the random working of our feeble child's intellect, but the tuition of our elders ; this is precisely the best, and, in point of fact, the only suitable method by which the human mind could be guided to this fundamental truth, supposing it to be a truth. To the child's mind the parent's word ought to be, as it is, evidence far stronger than the conclusions of his unpractised reason. He cannot be taught too early to think ; but to teach him too early to rely on his own efforts in seeking truth, and on his own judgment in discerning the true from the false, is as cruel a blunder

as to teach him to walk before his bones and joints are firm enough; and is likely to produce analogous mischief in making his judgment crooked and rickety for life.

If man is designed to be religious, then the best foster-parent of religion is instinctive faith in those whose wisdom, love, and power form the earthly providence that guards his cradle. If piety is to be possible to children, it must be by means of authoritative teaching. And were the soul not tempered and moulded in infancy to faith in objects within its grasp, higher objects of faith would afterwards take no hold upon it. Moreover, the prolonged infancy to which man is subject ought to be carefully considered here as suggesting a view of creative design but little explored—moral design. This lengthened immaturity does not appear to be a physical necessity. Lower animals attain larger bulk of bone and muscle, or finer delicacy of nervous tissue, in a few months, or at most in a few years. No physical reason can be pointed out why man might not reach full bodily maturity in seven or ten years. Nor is his prolonged childhood necessary for his intellect, since this may continue to develop long after his bodily frame has arrived at perfection, and even begun to decline. But this protracted pupilage is needed by his moral nature, which is ruled by habit; and it is admirably calculated to train and perfect his moral character.

Although, therefore, our having learned to believe in the being of an Almighty, All-wise, and All-merciful Creator of the world and Father of our spirits, before we could reason on the evidence for such belief, is in itself no direct proof that this belief is reasonable, yet it affords such corroborative proof as lies in the fact that the arrangement under which we learned this belief is in

admirable harmony with it, and is, so far as we can see, the only arrangement which would be so.

The other six kinds of evidence are direct, and require separate examination. It will be well, however, first to gain some comprehensive view of the evidence as a whole, and see what its several kinds have in common. For we shall find as we proceed, that while no amount of exposition short of an exhaustive exploration of the universe can do justice to the details of the argument, the most formidable objections are those which lie, not against separate points of the evidence, but against its character and method as a whole.

That the universe exists is a truth which we learn not in its abstract form, but piecemeal, by means of the interpretation intuitively given by our intellect to the shifting phenomena of sensation, inward consciousness, and memory. We learn that this and that thing exist, that this and that relation obtain between them, that this and that force operate on or in them ; and thus we build up by insensibly small additions our knowledge of a material universe. Through the sensible phenomena of the faces, voices, and moving figures surrounding us and acting on us, we discern the presence of other conscious beings like ourselves—persons ; and hold fellowship with them in love, fear, joy, sorrow, anger, obedience, faith. Reason—or say, if you prefer it, intelligence, intellect, or intuition—plunges beneath the glittering, murmuring, swiftly-flowing stream of phenomena, and plants her foot on the firm though hidden ground of reality. As she reveals to us that the inanimate forms besetting us on all sides are not illusions, but real existences—permanent causes,—independent of our perception of them, so she assures us that those active and vocal shapes

which attract us by so mysterious and powerful an affinity are not Things but Persons. We learn one of them at a time, and thus build up our social world,—our conception of the universe of mind. Our knowledge has two stages. In the first it extends itself from units to multitudes ; in the second it gathers itself from multiplicity into unity.

As our knowledge of individual things builds itself up into a material world, and of individual persons into a social human world, so our particular intuitions of fact condense themselves into general statements ; and these again into universal truths or axioms. We come to lay it down as certain that there can be no change without a cause, no action without an agent, no phenomenon without a substance (either ourself or something not ourself), no perpetuation of results but in some really existing subject, no thought but in a really existing mind. These and similar axioms have, with equal truth and equal error, been asserted by one set of philosophers and denied by another to be innate, intuitive, self-evident truths. They are so far from being intuitive or self-evident *in their universal form* that multitudes of sensible people live and die without once thinking of them, and keen and accomplished intellects have even called them in question. But no sane mind hesitates to take them for granted or to act upon them *in each particular case*. Philosophers may dispute about them as universal propositions ; but none but idiots can help believing them in detail as often as a fact exemplifying any of them may occur. Nor is this illogical. Logic is the faithful mirror of the human intelligence ; but, like all mirrors, it reverses what it reflects. In deductive reasoning, which is the application of our knowledge, we

extract the particular from the universal ; whereas in experience, which is the formation of our knowledge, we construct the universal by an aggregation of particulars. Those axioms which we term self-evident are so simply because they are short-hand statements of intuitions which are taking place every moment in millions of minds. It therefore matters nothing to the real nature of evidence, though it may matter very much to its impression, whether we accept a fact on the direct testimony of its own appropriate phenomena, or reinforce these by a universal proposition, which means neither more nor less than that we and everybody else are constantly receiving similar facts on similar evidence. In the one case we take the particular fact (as in the early years of life we have to take all our facts) and place it on the very foundation of our knowledge ; in the other case we build it by deductive reasoning into the fabric of knowledge, every part of which supports every other, and is buttressed by perpetual verification.

As soon as our acquaintance with things in general and human nature in particular becomes wide enough, and our intellect ripe enough, we discern relations between man and the universe for which no reason can be perceived in either separately. We find that though external nature is in no wise dependent on man, and would go on its way unaffected—those changes excepted which man's labour works on the earth's surface—if mankind were to perish, man is dependent on outward nature at every point. His bodily frame is built atom by atom out of the earth and atmosphere. His movements depend on the forces which govern matter. His faculties, mental as well as bodily, develop only under the stimuli and occasions which the physical universe

furnishes. Were even a slight alteration to take place in the action of gravitation, electricity, or chemical affinity, or in the pressure of fluids, or in the proportions of particular substances, man's life would forthwith become impossible. Yet Nature reveals no reason why it should be what it is. Furthermore, we find that so systematic a unity pervades Nature that the change of one law or of one element would change the whole. Yet no reason appears in external Nature why any element or law should be what it is. The harmony among the divers parts of Nature can no more be shown to be necessary than the harmony between Nature and Man.

Science, in its magical progress, if it cannot add to the certainty and significance of these facts, is perpetually illustrating them with fresh and more astonishing examples. Those harmonies among the several parts of Nature, and between Nature and Man, which were formerly discovered only on its surface, are found woven through its inmost texture. They include not only the subtlest processes of combination, and most recondite relations of force and quantity in things apparently arbitrary, but also laws which are now known to operate beyond the fixed stars and the Milky Way. Moreover, not alone these all-embracing laws, but those seemingly isolated accidents—such as the production and the position of the coal measures—on which human welfare is no less dependent, are found to date from periods preceding by millions of years or of ages the moment when earth first felt the footstep of man.

Our intellect would abuse and forfeit its nobility if we could survey these wonderful facts without drawing the inference that human nature and external nature have

some common source or ground wherein must lie the secret of that harmony, so essential to the one, so extraneous to the other, the reason of which cannot be found in either.

It is needless to enforce this point further, because it is now universally admitted that some deep common basis must exist for the universe and for man, for matter and for mind. The tendency, as we have seen, of modern speculation is to regard man as simply part of the universe, and mind as a modification, if not of matter, yet of THAT of which what we call matter is another modification. The crass materialism which talks about the brain secreting thought, as the liver secretes bile, is worthy only of those whose minds have grown cramped in a single posture, and who, in tracking the footsteps of science, have become blind to her true form. But the direction in which science is pointing, though it may not be the goal she will ever reach, is the reduction of all matter to a single element, of all forces to a single force, and of matter itself to force. "Monism" is the title proudly taken by one of the most recent and determined forms of opposition to all spiritual faith. To identify spirit with matter is absurd, but it is by no means absurd to maintain that deep down below consciousness, below matter, below all the forces and laws of nature as we know them, lies the common root of which consciousness is the central topmost shoot, and all the forces which play upon consciousness, and reflect themselves in its mirror, are living branches.

Be it so. Such a doctrine would not be inconsistent with the highest Christian belief, which teaches that from 'the word of the Lord'—the eternal thought and living will of God—nature and man alike derive their origin,



and that 'in Him we live and move and have our being.' But this unity of origin and of being, whether in the Pantheistic or in the Christian sense, is not the unity we are here dealing with, an explanation of which our reason demands. It is unity in multiplicity : not a unity out of which that multiplicity may have sprung, but a unity which it displays and subserves. It is not sameness of origin, but harmony of action. It is, in fact—and this is the main point to be seized—an IDEAL harmony. Ideal, not as opposed to reality, or as divorced from reality, but as comprehending a multitude of realities in a plan or system,—that is, in an Idea which can have no existence save in a mind capable of comprehending it. The natural facts composing the harmony are not ideal but material. Each happens in its own way, time, and place, according to its own laws, without reference to the laws of thought, or to any ends needful, useful, or pleasant to human beings. But the harmony which we perceive among the facts is ideal in the same sense in which an invention or discovery is ideal. Take, as an illustration, the operation of printing. The actual reality is, certain masses of different sorts of matter assembled in one place and subjected to certain forces. But the unity determining the relations to one another of the types, the paper, the ink, the wheels and levers and other portions of the machinery, the steam which drives the whole, and the furnace which converts the water into steam ;—the reason why all these things are there and so, and not elsewhere and otherwise, and which in fact makes the whole operation what it is—not mere movement and noise and blacking of white surfaces, but Printing—is this : that we have here a realised idea. The facts are physical ; their harmony is ideal. It necessarily supposes a mind

to which all the external facts were present before they had any existence, and in which the idea which harmonises them in a single purpose existed before it was realised in matter and motion, space and time. Nature presents a precisely parallel case, only on an infinitely grander scale. All its parts are *of use*, and none out of place. Not one, but innumerable purposes are being subserved every moment by the same machinery ; and each result is the focus in which innumerable dissimilar lines of activity meet. Each result is also a means to some further end. And in every case in which we are able to analyse natural processes, on the grandest or the minutest scale within reach of our thought, from the vibrations of the universal ether and the orbits of the furthest stars to the quivering of an atom of hydrogen, we find them conducted exactly *as if* the most refined calculations of numbers, figure, and quantity had been employed to regulate and harmonise them.

Take as an example what are called Kepler's laws. Ellipses, radii, areas, periodicity, squares, cubes, have no existence apart from a thinking mind. They are intellectual conceptions, not derived from the motions of the planets, but thought out quite independently. Yet those motions, not as they appear to the eye, but as reason explains them, and enables imagination to represent them, are found to involve and tally with these mathematical concepts. Nature at work out there, hundreds of millions of miles away from the observing eye, to which those mighty orbs with their inconceivable velocities dwindle to slow-creeping points of light ; Nature at work, just as she has been at work for millions of millions of years before man looked on the heavens, carries out these mathematical forms of thought with an accuracy which cannot

be equalled by the machines man constructs for the very purpose of realising his ideas. Kepler, as he watches the skies, is compelled to exclaim, with mingled delight and awe, "O God! I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" Or take, as further examples, the inclination of the earth's axis; the mass of the earth, determining the precise force of gravity on its surface; the amount of water in our globe; the capacity of water for heat, and the point at which it becomes solid; the specific gravity of oxygen and nitrogen, with their power of mixing uncombined; on which arrangements depend the density of the atmosphere, the winds, the floating of clouds in air, rain, snow, frost, fog, and clear sunshine. All these are wholly independent of the laws of planetary motion, and, as far as we know, independent of one another. Yet let any of these be changed, and that balance of forces would be upset on which depend the influence of the seasons, the gradations of climate, and the tilling of the grounds;—fundamental conditions of civilised human life.

Where does this all-pervading harmony exist, to which every atom of matter, every moment of life, bears witness? Not in our minds, for we have but slowly and partially deciphered its alphabet. Letter by letter we are continually spelling out its lessons; but we are as yet unable to grasp its entire scope, its fundamental principles, or its central idea; and we know that it must have existed incalculable ages before the intellect of man had birth. It is more real than all reality, for by virtue of it the universe is what it is—an intelligible whole, and not a chaos of aimless forces. Yet it is ideal, capable of existing only in thought; at all events inconceivable by us in any other way.

Only one theory of these facts is intellectually possible

We may chain our intellect to the facts themselves, arbitrarily forbidding it to step or look beyond them. But if we draw from them any conclusion at all, but one conclusion is possible. There must be A MIND to which all the facts of nature have been known from the beginning, which holds the keys of its mysteries, controls the relations of its elements and forces, and possesses the ideal pattern of that harmony which those elements and forces are every instant busy in realising.

At this point we are encountered by a formidable objection,—in fact, as I have before said, the only really formidable objection we have to deal with ; drawn from the supposed limits of human knowledge, and directed not against any detail, but against the whole range and method of our argument. This is not an affair of outposts : it is the main battery of scepticism which opens fire on our whole line. The objection is at bottom identical with that which we have already dealt with in regard to the idea of an Infinite Mind ; and it has the same complex root in the metaphysics not of a single school, but of the most opposite schools of philosophy, and in the methods and spirit of modern science.

Of the six kinds of evidence which I have enumerated, the second, third, fourth, and fifth add to the indications of a Supreme Original Mind, with which the first is concerned (the nature of which I have briefly sketched), parallel evidences of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and of His actual converse with men individually or in masses. The sixth rests on the constitution of human nature, and appeals to our moral faculties and to our instinctive faith in the truth of Nature in general, and of our own nature in particular. Thus the whole argument rests primarily on human con-

sciousness. Its appeal is to universal experience. Its force is that of accumulated probabilities; the light of an infinite multitude of rays bent to one focus. Or, to put it in logical phrase, the fundamental or major premiss of the argument, regarded as a whole, is psychological: *Such and such marks denote the presence of Mind* (whether as intellect, will, or love). The mediant or minor premiss is empirical: *The universe is crowded with such marks*. The conclusion is analogical: *The universe is pervaded by an omnipresent Mind*.

The objection in question is that we are straining analogy beyond its just bounds; that we have no right to argue from human minds to an Infinite Mind, or from what lies within experience to what lies outside it. It is one thing to infer the presence of mind from a manifest purpose or harmony in anything which may be a human work; another thing to make a like inference in Nature. We have experience of men inventing printing-machines and orreries, but we have no experience of a superhuman mind inventing a world. The objection in effect amounts to this, that our argument has either an ambiguous middle or a *petitio principii*. That is to say, either 'marks of mind' means one thing in the major premiss and another in the minor; or else, in assuming that those natural facts which resemble manifestations of wisdom, will, and love are indeed 'marks of mind,' we beg the very question we set out to prove. Our knowledge is bounded by the limits of our mental faculties, which we cannot enlarge; and by the circle of experience, which we cannot cross. To transcend the former is as impossible as to lift ourselves into the air. To transcend the latter is as impossible as for a bird to fly beyond the atmosphere. Our ideas, if they rise above the region of experience

(actual or possible), can have only subjective truth ; if they are to represent realities, they must consent to dwell within the realm of sensible objects.

This sweeping protest against the legitimacy and validity of our whole argument appeals for support (as I have before intimated) to the most opposite schools of philosophy. For what is experience ? If we say with the extreme empirical school that it is primarily sensation ; that thought is but transfigured sensation ; and that knowledge consists in the arrangement, recombination, and generalisation of phenomena — in other words, of actual or possible sensations—then it is manifest that experience will yield no ladder by which to climb to a First Cause, an Infinite Self, a Creative Mind. If, with the transcendentalist, we reply that experience consists in the handling by the mind of the phenomena presented by sense, which could not be perceived at all, much less arranged and understood, had not the mind within itself certain forms or faculties by which it gives shape to the else unmeaning and incoherent mass of sensations, then we may indeed rise by the use of the same faculties to the idea of an Infinite, Perfect, and Eternal First Cause ; but we are building within our own mind, and can find neither bridge to pass nor wings to soar from our idea of God to God Himself.

I hope to show that this objection, formidable as it looks, and confidently as it is often advanced, is fallacious ; and that the attempt to fence in our knowledge with a hard definite line, embracing within its circle the whole realm of what can be sensibly perceived and certainly known, and shutting out the spiritual and unknowable, is arbitrary, illegitimate, and in the highest degree unphilosophical.

Let us turn back for a moment to the question,—What is experience? If by experience we mean that furnished by our own senses, consciousness, and memory, then we have no experience of the working of any mind but our own. The invention of a printing-press, unless we happen to have invented one ourselves, lies as truly beyond the sphere of experience as the creation of a world. And as both lie equally beyond, so both may equally come within it. Minds of men are as absolutely hidden from us, as completely veiled from our perception, as the Divine Mind. They are revealed by phenomena, intuitively interpreted. We read what is passing, or has passed, in men's inward consciousness, from their actions, their gestures, the expression of their countenances, the tones of their voices; not by a process of reasoning, but with an intuition as direct as those on which reasoning rests. With a single sure step our knowledge passes from the seen to the unseen, from the material to the spiritual, from phenomena to substance and cause. We transcend experience if that narrow and shallow definition of experience is to hold. Precisely in the same way, if phenomena are presented to us which our intellect with the like intuitive discernment interprets as indications of the presence and activity of a Supreme Mind (and can interpret no otherwise), we are not reasoning from analogy; we are performing an identical act of intelligence, though on an immensely grander scale. We transcend experience by the same law in the one case as in the other.

But if by this term 'experience' we mean to express the whole of our knowledge, including the inductions and deductions of our reason, and our intuitive interpretations of sensible phenomena; then, supposing the evidence to be adequate, the existence, agency, and character of

God are as much matter of experience as those of our fellow-men. His mind, if it exist at all, must be as near to us as theirs, or rather much nearer ; for we must suppose Him to have the power of reading our thoughts, and of directly communicating with our minds ; whereas they are restricted to indirect communication through signs furnished by sensation. His existence, mysterious—or, if we like to say so, unintelligible—though it be, is not more so than theirs ; since *to begin to be* is quite as incomprehensible as to exist from eternity. If He communicate to us truths which we can comprehend, commands which we can obey, promises which we can put to the test, help by which we are consciously strengthened, love to which the love of our hearts responds, He comes as truly within the sphere of our experience as do the minds of our fellow-men. And though He infinitely transcends our knowledge, this does not destroy the parallel, for we have but partial knowledge of the mind that is nearest our own.

“ Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,  
Our hermit spirits dwell and range apart.”

The fact that human minds are considered to *inhabit* their bodily organisations is of no consequence to the argument. A man’s mind is no less manifest in his steam-engine, his painting, his building, than in the expression of his countenance. Our most intimate knowledge of the minds of others is derived from their actions, and from the arbitrary signs of language which have no natural significance. We have no more doubt of the existence of a person who does business with us at the Antipodes than if he were seated at our fireside. Suppose a man could invent and construct an automaton capable of imitating human actions, and that he had power



perfectly to control its actions from a distance by the mere force of his will ; would not the movements of this automaton afford as trustworthy indications of the motions of his unseen and distant spirit as those of his own body when visibly present ? What difference, then, is there in the principle or the validity of the evidence, if instead of an automaton controlled by an unseen person at a distance we contemplate a universe constructed and controlled by a Mind equal to that vast work ; not distant or absent, though necessarily not visible in that particular sense in which human minds are visible, through the possession of a finite bodily organisation ? Or what is it, to speak plainly, but a childish prejudice, which makes any one imagine that he has in a smile, a blush, a tear, the sound of a voice, the motions of a visible shape, any surer evidence of the presence of one of those intelligent, active, passionate spirits whom he calls his friends, than we behold in the inexhaustible and unfailing indications of invention, calculation, prevision, boundless resource, love of the beautiful, the systematic, the harmonious, and delight in happiness—in a word, of unbounded wisdom, power, and benevolence,—filling this majestic and orderly frame of Nature ; of the being, presence, and agency of an Infinite Mind ?

Possibly it may be urged that, at all events, men *do* deny the existence of God, and that the fact of this denial impeaches the sufficiency of the evidence. It might be replied that insane persons frequently disbelieve the existence of their friends ; that philosophers have thought it their glory to deny the reality of matter ; that there has been a whole sect (the Egoists) each of whom denied the certainty of any existence but his own ; that, in a word, there is no evidence which,

under sufficient motive, a man may not bring himself to resist. But the true force of the objection lies here, that men so easily come to doubt of God's existence. To explain this we must bear in mind that the intrinsic worth of evidence is one thing, the force with which it impresses the mind is another. The understanding of those sensations which are to serve as signs of the existence and presence of our fellow beings is the earliest task of intellect, the condition of our entrance within the circle of human fellowship. This task, completed before the beginning of our remembered experience, has left its results among the primary and most indubitable elements of our knowledge. Here and there a deeply metaphysical spirit, by intense self-scrutiny, attains to a speculative doubt of the validity of his primary beliefs. But the boldest philosophic sceptic dares not bring these doubts down from the airy void of speculation to the *terra firma* of practical life. He must act; and the moment he acts he virtually surrenders his scepticism, to resume it only when he relapses into solitary meditation. Such speculative doubts are the moss and lichen of thought, from which ordinary minds are preserved by the friction of social converse and daily toil.

The reasons, therefore, are plain why it is so far more easy to disbelieve the existence of God (though proved by essentially similar evidence) than to doubt that of our fellow-men. First, it is learned differently, and learned later. Sensible phenomena directly reveal to us the existence of persons and things around us. But it is the persons and things themselves which, in their turn, furnish to us the evidence of God's existence; and this not until we have previously learned it by authoritative teaching.

Alike the phenomena of sense and the realities they reveal constitute a language conveying valid and certain knowledge. But the former are like our mother tongue, which we do not remember learning, and which twines so closely round our minds that it is difficult for us to distinguish words from thoughts. The latter resemble a foreign language learned through the medium of our mother tongue, which, though it may unlock new stores of truth to our understanding, can never impress us in the same lively and intimate manner. Secondly, in the case of the world of matter, and the world of human minds, with both of which we are in conscious relation every waking moment, we find ourselves under bondage to imperious motives, which compel us to recognise the reality of things and persons around us; whereas in reference to the existence of God the mind finds itself free to believe or to disbelieve without any obvious practical consequences. Not only so, but although a lofty and comprehensive view of our nature and destiny discloses to us the most powerful practical reasons for acting on even a faint probability that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, the character and circumstances of multitudes of men are such that it appears to them unspeakably desirable that there were no God. Unbelief is to them not only easy but welcome. "Probability is the guide of life;" but we daily see countless cases in which men, under the pressure of some mean but present motive, defy probability amounting to moral certainty, and entail on themselves shame and ruin.

The argument, that in reasoning from Nature, and especially Human Nature, to a Personal First Cause we are transcending experience, and therefore reasoning

in the air, being submitted to fair examination at the bar both of common sense and of philosophy, is thus convicted of fallacy. On one definition of experience it proves too much; on another it proves nothing. If experience means only those sensations or phenomena which are the mother tongue of all knowledge, then our belief in the existence of any other mind than our own—nay, in the veracity of memory, and so in our own personal identity—transcends experience. Still more our belief in the objects we see and handle; in universal elements and forces; in the solar system or the starry universe. The infant who cries for his mother, “and with no language but a cry,” has already taken that miraculous step from the seen to the unseen which is the condition of all practical knowledge. But if experience means the body of our knowledge, of which the heart and backbone is our intuitive interpretation of phenomena, then the knowledge of the Supreme Mind may as truly come within the range of valid experience, and on identical principles, as our knowledge of the inmates of our homes, of the inhabitants of countries we have never visited, or of those great minds of the past which live for us in their works. That a philosopher should persuade himself that he has valid evidence of the existence of Horace or of Shakespeare, but that he cannot have valid evidence of the existence of his Creator, is, if you will look deeply into it, an amazing example, not of metaphysical acumen, but of metaphysical perversity.

The objection we have been dealing with is so subtly diffused in the air of modern thought, so constantly coming to the surface of controversy in shapes but slightly varied, and so triumphantly paraded as unanswerable, that it may not be superfluous to restate it in

the pointed words of a powerful and brilliant thinker.<sup>1</sup> “If, instead of pursuing the same thread [of reasoning] either upward or downward, we pass suddenly from Nature to its Cause, and say, ‘There is in Nature such a being, himself a member and a portion of the whole, who works after a certain fashion; therefore the First Cause of this whole must needs have worked in the same fashion,’—it cannot be doubted that we are coming to a very bold and very rash conclusion, which, to say the least, is not contained in the premises.”

In this criticism, Man as a spiritual agent—that is to say, the consciousness, memory, and imagination, which reflect Nature; the reason, which applies analysis and synthesis to Nature; and the will, which reacts upon and controls Nature;—is included under the term ‘Nature’ as a mere fellow-part of the universe with atoms and forces. This is, in fact, to employ the word ‘Nature’ as a bare term, void of all meaning beyond co-existence and mutual influence. It would be scarcely more unphilosophical to extend the meaning of the term so as to include God. For mental forces—will, emotion, reasoning, remembrance—are so essentially different from physical forces—gravitation, cohesion, molecular vibration, photal vibration, and so forth—that no common idea can be framed which the word ‘force’ can represent in both cases, nor any common law discovered under which mental and physical forces range. The laws of Nature are uniformities of action, capable of being stated as intelligible formulæ, each of which is a compendious statement of what actually occurs in every particular case coming under it. If it be a law of variation, it fixes

<sup>1</sup> M. Janet, quoted by M. Vacherot in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, September 1, 1876.

the ratio and limits of variation. A law irregularly fulfilled, and occasionally reversed, is not a law of Nature. Laws of mind, on the contrary, are of two kinds : ideal or typical laws, fixing a standard which always OUGHT to be, but in no single mind IS, permanently and universally obeyed ; and empirical laws, expressing tendencies and limits of variation, in regard to which no two minds precisely agree, nor any individual mind uniformly resembles itself. Of the first kind are the laws of reasoning and of duty ; of the second, those of sensation, of association, of pleasure and pain. Those of the second kind, especially those of sensation, make some approach to universality ; yet a large number of persons fail to distinguish red from green ; many others are insensible to melody and harmony ; and the senses of touch, taste, and smell are extremely variable.

The control of mind over the material world, as far as known to us, is limited to the power of producing motion, massive or molecular. Matter, on the contrary, influences mind in innumerable ways, known and unknown. But besides these points of contact, or mutual influence, there are innumerable correspondences or analogies between the material world and the world of mind. Such, for example, are the analogies between light and knowledge, sunshine and joy, darkness and misery or ignorance ; the edge or point of a blade and mental acuteness ; sweet sour or bitter flavours, and happy or unhappy tempers. These resemblances are purely mental : a natural symbolism in which Nature mirrors thought. On the other hand, there is nothing whatever in material Nature actually resembling judgment, reasoning, will, remembrance, fancy, conscience, or any form of consciousness. The surface which Nature turns towards us is a mirror

in which the mind sees its own inmost consciousness reflected ; but it is the surface only.

The doctrine, therefore, that Man—meaning human consciousness, reasoning, and will—is a part of Nature, is either untrue or unmeaning: untrue, if material Nature be meant; unmeaning, if the term ‘Nature’ be so enlarged as to include mental forces with physical. The universe resembles, not a chain of which man forms a link, but a chain on which man can lay his hand, and sway it this way or that, though without bending a link or starting a rivet. We do not “pass suddenly” from natural to voluntary causation when we see man’s thought and purpose wrought out in his house or picture or book: we see the two inseparably combined. Man’s work is also Nature’s work. So neither do we pass suddenly from Nature to its First Cause if in the material world, in human nature, and in the relations of the two, we read plan, foresight, knowledge, love of order and beauty, benevolent and righteous purpose, resembling those of man as the sunlight that fills the sky resembles its reflection in a dewdrop. Just as we do not pass suddenly from a writing to its meaning, or from a frown or smile on a man’s face to his inward emotions, but discern the unseen in the seen (in the one case by association, in the other intuitively), so we discern these qualities written on the surface, and inwoven in the structure of Nature. And since they are spiritual qualities, we as rationally infer a spiritual cause and substance as we infer a physical cause and substance underlying sensible phenomena. Man’s workmanship differs from the workmanship of the universe as a pattern printed or painted on a surface differs from one dyed in the wool or wrought in the loom. Knowledge, purpose, imagination, skill, goodwill,

sense of harmony and beauty, are marks of mind on whatever scale they are beheld ; whether on the minute scale of a picture, house, or machine, or on the vast scale of the vegetable kingdom or the solar system.

Of course it is easy to deny all this: much easier to deny than to disprove. And at present it is the fashion to deny it. "You do not carry me with you," says the empirical philosopher, "when you speak of cause or substance underlying sensible phenomena. These are but terms of old-world metaphysic, to which I assign no meaning." Perhaps not. Nevertheless the fact remains certain, that how carefully soever philosophers may express themselves when they are on their guard, talking by rote and on system ; whenever they have to speak or act seriously about either the world of nature or the world of practical human life, their speech and action take for granted the very ideas which on system they disclaim. We see plainly enough that they are thinking, speaking, or acting, not with reference to co-existences and successions of phenomena, but with reference to real men and women, real plants and beasts, atoms and stars, real motions in time and space. When the philosopher discusses the nature of the belts of Jupiter, he is thinking not of the tiny striped disc which is all the telescope can show him, but of that enormous globe which no human eye has ever seen, or ever will see, yet of which human intellects have accurately ascertained the weight, shape, motion in the immensity of space, and influence on the motions of the globe we inhabit. When he plants a hyacinth, he does so not merely with an expectation of those lovely phenomena which he will call the flower, but with undoubting belief—a belief which is valid knowledge—in a continuous living process, connecting his act



in planting with the punctual apparition of the predicted blossom; which process is as truly hidden from sense as the thought in another mind, or the existence of the Creator. When he sees the frown on the face of his foe, the smile, or blush, or tear on the cheek of his love, his thought does not dwell in the phenomena, but discerns with involuntary certainty the inward emotion in the hidden depths of that other consciousness, and with instinctive penetration divines the invisible germ of purpose, of which, perhaps, that other mind itself is scarcely conscious, but which may one day cross his path in the tempest of hatred or sunshine of love. As a philosopher he rejects the terms 'substance,' 'cause,' 'reality underlying phenomena;' but as a sensible practical man his thought and life in every particular instance take for granted the truths of which these and such-like terms express the general ideas.

"You grow too metaphysical," says the sceptic. "I will drop the dispute about terms. I fall back on my assertion that you are taking an illegitimate, irrational, illogical step when, from the works of a known finite worker, working upon the surface of Nature, you draw a conclusion as to the working of an Unknown Infinite Worker behind, or within, or underneath Nature. That a watch works harmoniously and well proves that a man made it. That a honeycomb works harmoniously and well proves that a bee made it. But that the bodily organisation of the watchmaker, or of the bee, or the globe they inhabit, or the solar system to which that globe belongs, works harmoniously and well does not prove that a Supreme Mind made these, with the Nature of which they are part: *it only proves* (as an eminent living critic says) *that they work harmoniously and well.*"

Is this so? If so, why? Denial, as we said, is both cheap and fashionable. But by what authority is the highway of thought thus barred to the common sense of mankind? Logically, of course, no conclusion follows in the one case or the other until we supply some anterior proposition; such as that "harmony and well-working are attributes only of products of intelligence." But on reflection we find that in any such major premiss we are simply generalising the certainty which forces itself on our mind in each particular instance. The argument gains in form only, not force, by being cast in a syllogism. By what right, then, do we separate these particular instances into two opposed classes, and say,—In all those cases which display the work of a human being or of an intelligent animal (a bee or a beaver, for example) the intuitive certainty that harmony and well-working to a wise end are marks of mind is valid (even though the man, like the bee and the beaver, may be employing principles he does not understand); but in all those cases which display superhuman and even infinite skill and wisdom, power, and benevolence, this same inference is illegitimate and false—?

The sceptic can but reiterate his old answer, for he has no other, that in the one case we judge within our experience, in the other we transcend it. The fallacy of this position has, I hope, been sufficiently exposed. Those intuitively discerned certainties, on one of which what is termed the 'Design Argument' rests, cannot be derived from experience, for they are constituent elements without which the body of experience could no more have grown than the human body without the nerves and spinal cord. When we apply the truths reaped in the tiny field of our own and our fellows' ex-

perience, and sow them as fruit-bearing seed across the vast field of the universe, we are acting on exactly the same principles as the physical philosopher when he applies the properties of an ellipse three inches long, with the help of the picture of it he has drawn on a half sheet of paper, to the planetary orbits; or from the behaviour of a few cubic inches of hydrogen or a few grains of sodium in his lamp, tells us what bodies are burning in the sun, or shining in the nebulæ. Experience would be useless, because unmeaning, were it not also prophecy. Its narrow private footpath makes us free of the imperial high road of knowledge. Its tiny rivulet leads to the universe of truth, from which its springs are secretly fed; and we do not deceive ourselves when we believe that in analysing a drop we have analysed the ocean.

Thus far we have surveyed, not traversed, our field of argument. Those theories of knowledge which would either bind reason, like a field slave, to cultivate only the surface of Nature, or would imprison it, like a *roi fainéant*, in the citadel of consciousness, demand fuller treatment. For, let men deride or denounce Metaphysics as they may, it abides true that, as the root of popular scepticism is philosophic scepticism, so the root of philosophic scepticism is false metaphysics. Or, to put it in another way; the basis of faith cannot be practically safe unless it is metaphysically sound. The true theory of our knowledge of God must needs involve the true theory of knowledge itself.

Meanwhile, the conclusions which, as it seems to me, we have firmly reached, are the following:—

I. As our highest and most certain experimental science (the doctrines of astronomy, for example, concerning the planetary masses and motions, or of chemistry concern-

ing atoms, molecules, heat, affinity) refer not to sensible phenomena, but to unseen realities capable of being intellectually formulated; and as, again, our really useful knowledge of human beings, acquired by experience, is not of their outward manifestation to sense, but of their unseen character, will, thought, and emotion; so our knowledge of the Infinite and Supreme Mind, if the evidence be sufficient, comes as truly within the range of experience, and in the same sense transcends experience, as our knowledge of the universe and of our fellow-men.

II. That our knowledge of the Seen and of the Unseen are not opposed to each other, but on every side pervade and melt into one another in vital, inseparable, mutually indispensable union.

III. That the attempt to draw any rigid and final line between the Known and the Unknowable, fencing in the material, the sensible, the finite as our legitimate inheritance, and fencing out the spiritual, the unseen, the infinite as a kind of prohibited ghost-land; proscribing as an intellectual outlaw the man who dares to cross the boundary;—is intellectually as unauthorised and unwarrantable, as, if successful, it would be morally disastrous.

Science, we are told, claims the realm of the Knowable; and, if her claim is loyally acknowledged, willingly cedes the phantom kingdom of the Unknowable to Religion. Science will have neither miracle nor mystery; neither a Supreme Will and Intelligence, varying at pleasure the ordinary course of Nature for man's good, just as man controls it for his own; nor yet a Nature above and beneath all other nature, the eternal foundation and source of all other being. Science knows those

objects alone which submit themselves to the exploring finger of experiment ; and knows nothing of a Being beyond the range of any experiment, except the moral experiment of love, trust, obedience,—or of disobedience, rejection, and unbelief.

But who is it who is authorised thus to speak in the name of Science ? By what right ? Do men of science forget that they are the disciples of Science, not her tutors ; her servants, not her lords ? Who are these modern Canutes, who, beaching their tiny though well-laden shallop of thought at the level of to-day's high-water, turn to the great incoming flood of knowledge and say,—“ Thus far, and no further ” ? To-morrow a higher flood will sweep away their tide-mark. Knowledge will continue to advance ; and the very nature of its progress is from the seen and limited to the unseen and illimitable. What is to-day the unknown is not therefore the unknowable, and may to-morrow become the known.

As we rise and our prospect expands, the horizon widens that indicates our ignorance. But could we rise higher still the horizon would begin to shrink ; the blue vault that overarches it would be left below us ; Earth would dwindle to a shining ball,—to a point of light in the boundless expanse. Even now there is one direction in which no horizon cramps our view. When we look upward, our insight into the infinite deep of space is bounded only by our power of vision.

Even thus, hemmed in as we are by the horizon of sense, when we turn the eye of our spirit upward we find no barrier between our thought and the Infinite Mind. God's smile beams on us from the remotest star-cloud. Law, which is God's voice, speaks to us through all the silent infinitude of space. No valid reason can be

given why the communion of our spirit with the Infinite Father of spirits should not be as real as with the spirits of our fellow-men, and far closer ; or why the knowledge of God should not be our surest as well as highest and most precious wisdom. If in the knowledge and love of our fellows lies all that makes life on earth desirable, what so reasonable as to believe that to know HIM is life eternal ?

LECTURE IV.

*KNOWLEDGE: ITS NATURE AND  
VALIDITY.*





## LECTURE IV.

KNOWLEDGE : ITS NATURE AND VALIDITY.

§ I.—*Introductory. Collective and Personal Knowledge.  
Relativity of Knowledge.*

UNQUESTIONING faith is the peaceful haven in which the multitude of minds lie safely moored, needing no evidence because troubled with no doubt. This serene belief, supposing it happens to be true, answers all the practical purposes, mental discipline excepted, of the most assured knowledge; just as a traveller who has been carried up a mountain has the same prospect from the top with one who has climbed step by step; though, if the question be of healthful development of muscle, there is no comparison between the two modes. A sailor who takes the moon's age and the hour of high water from his almanac, with no knowledge of the theory of the tides or of the moon's orbit, is as well off for practical purposes as the astronomer who calculated the tables. In all practical matters the influence and value of knowledge depend on its clearness, accuracy, and certainty; not at all (except, as aforesaid, for intellectual culture) on the method by which we arrive at it.

2. But as soon as any one begins to ask,—“WHY do I believe this? HOW do I know it; and how do I KNOW that I know it?”—he has slipped his moorings and

launched into the open sea. If he is to find anchorage again he must heave his own anchor overboard in many fathoms. And if his inquiry concern any of the great primary beliefs of mankind—as the belief in moral obligation or in the existence of God—he cannot go far without coming upon the central question of metaphysics: “How do I know anything, and how am I certain that I know anything?” ‘Metaphysics’ is a vague term, and to many readers an alarming one. The meaning I attach to it, however, is sufficiently simple: I take it to mean *the Science of Knowledge*; or, if we admit (as we must) that this science has not yet been constructed, the endeavour to construct it, including the inquiry whether such a science is possible. Of Metaphysics, therefore, thus understood, the question lying at the very core, is the one just stated: “*How do we know anything; and how are we certain that we know anything?*” In other words, What is the nature, and what is the validity of human knowledge?

3. To a practised student of metaphysical philosophy, no treatment of this question will be apt to seem suitable or sufficient which does not include a criticism of the answers given to it by the great leaders of metaphysical thought, the founders or champions of rival schools. Such criticism, however, lies wholly outside my present purpose. It may prove a safer and more fruitful as well as simpler task to strike out a fresh path for ourselves, than to thread the tangled tracks of old battle-fields. The mere inquirer after truth, whose interest in metaphysics is simply that of a workman in his tools, is anxious to know, not what Locke or Kant, Hamilton or Mill, has thought, but what he should think himself. He is not bound to take sides in any of the undecided con-

troversies waged between rival schools, merely because their leaders were intellectual giants who made the world ring with their strokes. Moreover, by taking a side he may lose the real fruit of the strife. For philosophical like religious truth is wider than sects. When opposite views have been persistently maintained by minds of great original force and finished culture, it is not probable that truth lies wholly with either; and it is more than probable that it is larger than both put together; as the earth turns on opposite poles, but its centre of gravity lies midway, and Arctic and Antarctic zones together make but a fraction of its surface.

4. Let us first remove from our path a huge but subtle confusion, a pitfall deep and wide enough to entrap the most powerful intellects if (as may easily happen) they are too intent on their own theories to take note of it. This confusion lurks in the word 'Knowledge.' It consists in the failure to discriminate between *personal* and *collective* knowledge. When we speak of knowledge—human knowledge—we mean one of two things: either the knowledge possessed or attainable by a single mind, or the knowledge possessed by a combination of minds. Let us take a simple example of the latter. In a trial by jury, the knowledge of facts possessed and contributed by each witness, the knowledge of the law possessed and contributed by the judge, and the previous knowledge which qualifies each jurymen to understand the evidence and the judge's directions and to form an intelligent judgment: these together compose the knowledge necessary for a verdict in which the twelve minds of the jury shall intelligently agree. Or, again, the captain's knowledge of the course the ship ought to take, the steersman's knowledge of the direction in which her head is pointing,

and the knowledge which enables each of the crew to obey orders, compose the collective knowledge whereby the ship is navigated.

Knowledge is therefore PERSONAL or COLLECTIVE. We shall be involved in dire confusion if we do not define our reference, and speak indiscriminately now of one, now of the other, now of both.

5. Personal knowledge when analysed separates into two elements, or factors: that portion (the smaller but indispensably essential) which the mind has acquired for itself, and that portion (immensely larger, but of all shades of value down to worthlessness) which has been communicated by other minds. Of this latter portion, even those parts which have practically become most indispensable, might have been replaced by some equivalent knowledge. Language, for example, is indispensable to every one; but whether it should be French, English, German, or any other, depends on the people with whom he has to live. Personal knowledge is thus either original or acquired. The original knowledge which the infant works out for himself in the earliest months of life, before he understands speech, forms the foundation of all his after-knowledge; and is perhaps more truly wonderful than the discoveries of Newton. But for all that we ordinarily mean by thought and intelligence, language and converse with other minds are as indispensable as for the development of affection, emotion, and habit. The distance between a civilised European and a barbarous African is narrow compared with the distance separating the savage, as we call him—able to hunt, fight, build huts, and make speeches in the parliament of his tribe—from a human being that should grow up—were such a thing possible—in perfect solitude.

6. Not only, then, for collective knowledge, which is the throwing into a common stock, by means of some kind of language, many separate stocks of personal knowledge ; but also for personal knowledge beyond the glimmering guesses and mysterious intuitions of infancy, the interworking of at least two minds is necessary. Human knowledge resembles not a bundle of single threads laid side by side, or loosely twisted, but a closely-woven web, of which each thread is slender and fragile, but the whole texture invincibly strong and of unlimited power of extension, and from which no man can disentangle what his own mind has spun.

7. We have not yet fully fathomed the preliminary pitfall against which we are guarding. But we may pause a moment to note how utterly untenable is the position of the philosophic sceptic. "In all this talk of collective knowledge and interaction of at least two minds, you are taking for granted," he will say, "the real existence of another mind beside my own. I decline to admit this assumption. I am certain of my own consciousness, at least from moment to moment, because I cannot help it. But I will take nothing for granted beyond my own impressions and ideas,—the sphere of my own consciousness ; and I can find no demonstration of the existence of either matter or mind outside myself. My only voucher for matter is a congeries of sensations ; my only voucher for my own mind is a series of states of consciousness. I will, at all events, believe nothing but what I can prove from this starting-point."

Be it so. But at any rate be consistent. In order to throw yourself back to the condition of infancy and solitude, begin by disrobing your mind of that vesture

of language which fits it like a skin. For what is language but the produce of other minds than our own, and the medium of intercourse between mind and mind? What is every word but a condensed fragment of history, on whose abraded surface is still legible the handwriting of countless generations of minds, and in whose substance are entombed the secrets of an immemorial past? You cannot so much as make the attempt. Consistent scepticism is therefore impossible. As a *tour de force*—a feat of mental athletic—an acute intellect can put itself into an attitude of total scepticism logically impregnable. But (as Hume himself gaily confesses) the first shock of contact with reality is enough to upset the unnatural equipoise. Partial scepticism is inconsistent; but consistent scepticism is impossible: persevered in, it would be insanity; practised, it would be suicide.

8. To return. Knowledge, collective or personal, acquired by tuition or by intuition, exists only in a knowing mind or combination of minds. The exigencies of language lead us to speak of knowledge as though it were a *product* distinct from the *act* of knowing; as a picture, a house, a carpet, is the product of painting, building, or weaving. But in truth it is not so. Knowledge is knowing. The inscrutable power of memory (apart from which knowledge could not begin) enables us to register, by means of language, those complicated or comprehensive judgments which we call general notions, ideas, concepts, and the like, as well as those images which serve us as symbols of the whole outer world. But although we are thus enabled to speak of knowledge as stored up in memory, and from this invisible treasury we draw at will, or drink the streams which pour forth unbidden, yet these words, notions, and

images are but symbols of thought—that is, of thinking. They are real living knowledge only as they take part in some present act of knowing. By a use of the word a degree more removed we speak of knowledge as stored up in books. But in reality what books contain is not knowledge, but only the symbols of knowledge ; some of them arbitrary, as alphabetic letters, arithmetical and algebraic signs ; some natural, as pictures and geometrical diagrams. These symbols form the channel through which the knowledge of minds severed from us by distance or by death is poured into our own. They are transformed into knowledge just so far (and no further) as they are rightly interpreted.

9. We are now prepared to detect a more subtle form of the confusion against which we are seeking to guard. The exigencies of thought, as well as of language, compel us to speak of MIND in the abstract. Ordinary people, as much as philosophers, talk of ‘the mind,’ as they talk of the hand, the brain, the elephant, the bee. In fact, however, there is no such entity as the elephant or the brain, but an ever-varying multitude of elephants and of brains. In like manner there is no such thing or being as ‘THE MIND.’ There is thy mind, my mind, some ten or twelve hundred millions of minds (going and coming by thousands every hour), without counting those that have parted company with their brains, and gone beyond the horizon of our philosophy. When therefore we speak (as we constantly must) of ‘the mind’ as knowing, or of knowledge in relation to ‘the mind,’ we shall fall into a fatal confusion if we neglect to keep clearly before us that we are merely using a convenient kind of mental and verbal short-hand ; and that what we are really dealing with is one of three : namely,

a single mind, or a plurality of minds, or the totality of human minds, regarded as a class or genus.

10. Indisputable and even obvious as these cautions may be when clearly stated, it seems impossible that if they had been borne in mind philosophers could have committed the error of attempting to solve the problem of knowledge from the starting-point of a single mind. It is like attempting to find two unknown quantities from a single equation. The problem is insoluble; but it is also imaginary. Knowledge as we possess it could never have come into existence without the interaction of at least two minds. Man's intellect as well as his heart is social, and capable of development only in society. What might be the knowledge of a solitary human mind, supposing an infant could by some means live and grow to maturity in mental isolation, we have no means of conjecturing. The question is curious, but vain. Were such an abnormal specimen of humanity procurable, we should be little the wiser; for, lacking language, he (or it) would be unable to impart such ideas as he might have contrived to acquire. We should learn less from such an unnatural man than from carefully observing the natural life of the lower animals; some of which (as birds) receive a considerable amount of parental tuition, while others (as fishes) are absolutely self-educated.

11. It behoves now to consider the bearing of the confusion we have thus eliminated from our theory of knowledge upon a doctrine, or at all events a phrase, to which the authority of Sir W. Hamilton has given wide currency: "*The Relativity of Knowledge.*" A current phrase does not always imply a current doctrine; for the same words may be used by different writers in very different senses. Stock phrases and technical terms



passing current under the stamp of a high authority are indeed very liable to become a hindrance instead of a help to the progress of a science whose elements are still matter of controversy. There is the double danger of their hiding differences of thought, and of their leading the student to mistake the development of a terminology for the discovery of truth.

12. All knowledge must be relative to mind ; for apart from mind knowledge has no existence. Mind, on the other hand (in the sense of intelligence), if void of knowledge would be but a blank form, a latent, undeveloped potency of knowing. On this primary fact rests the witness of universal nature to the being of GOD. We perceive the universe to resemble an immense book written in many languages, known and unknown ; in whose countless pages we are continually deciphering fresh meanings, often mysterious, even astounding, but all harmonious. The rope of sand which (unhappily) some of the most powerful minds among us have set themselves to spin, is the solution of the problem how MEANING can emerge from the symbols of nature if MIND has not infused it ; how there can be knowledge without mind, or truth without intelligence. Failing—as they needs must fail—to solve this question, they persuade themselves, and labour to persuade others, that it is a question men have no right to ask. Nevertheless it is a question that will continue to be asked, and which can have but one answer. Knowledge implies mind, as motion implies force and space. Universal knowledge, therefore, such as oozes forth from every pore of nature, must have its abode in a MIND which comprehends the universe. And if all Nature is built—as it is—on such knowledge, an all-comprehending Mind must be the Author of the universe.

13. It will, however, be objected—to some extent justly—that this phrase, “*relativity of knowledge*,” has a much wider meaning in the writings of the eminent men who have given it vogue than the simple sense here assigned to it: namely, that knowledge is relative to mind, having no existence but in a knowing mind. “The proposition that all our knowledge is only relative” is thus explained by Sir W. Hamilton:—“It is relative, 1<sup>o</sup>, Because existence is not cognisable absolutely and in itself, but only in special modes; 2<sup>o</sup>, Because these modes can be known only because they stand in a certain relation to our faculties; and, 3<sup>o</sup>, Because the modes thus relative to our faculties are presented to, and known by, the mind only under modifications determined by these faculties themselves.” (*Lect. on Metaphysics*, i. p. 148.) This relative or *conditioned* knowledge is identified with the knowledge of the finite, and merely phenomenal, as opposed to the knowledge of the absolute, of the infinite, of the unconditioned, or of things in themselves.<sup>1</sup> We cannot out-

<sup>1</sup> “Our whole knowledge of mind and of matter is relative—conditioned—relatively conditioned. Of things absolutely or in themselves, be they external, be they internal, we know nothing, or know them only as incognisable, and we become aware of their incomprehensible existence only as this is indirectly and accidentally revealed to us through certain qualities related to our faculties of knowledge, and which qualities again we cannot think as unconditioned, irrelative, existent in and of themselves. All that we know is therefore phænomenal—phænomenal of the unknown. . . . Nor is this denied, for it has been commonly confessed that we know not what is Matter, and are ignorant of what is Mind.”—*Discussions*, pp. 639, 640.

“The cardinal point of Sir W. Hamilton’s philosophy (says the ablest of his disciples and expositors), expressly announced as such by himself, is the absolute necessity under any system of philosophy whatever of acknowledging the existence of a sphere of belief beyond the limits of the sphere of thought. ‘The main scope of my speculation,’ he says, ‘is to show articulately that we must *believe* as actual much that we are unable positively to *conceive* as possible.’”—*Dean Mansel in Contemporary Review*, January 1866. *Hamilton, Lect. ii.* p. 534.

think the bounds of thought, nor penetrate by reason below the foundations of all reasoning, any more than we can breathe beyond the limits of our atmosphere. And we might contentedly allow this, and think ourselves none the worse off, were there not irresistibly suggested throughout this entire *Philosophy of the Conditioned* the oppressive imagination that behind the phantasmagoria of phenomena with which our reason entertains itself is the living form of Truth, on whose veiled face we are doomed never to gaze ; that the atmosphere in which our intellect breathes and has its being is one of illusion, and that beyond its impassable limits lies the universe of reality, from which—unlike the visible universe which encircles our floating island home of earth, overwhelming our reason with its awful immensity, but cheering us with kindly messages of light from its remotest depths—no ray of sun or star can ever reach us. Our intellect, which proudly believes itself free to follow truth to the bounds of the universe, is imprisoned in that most hopeless of dungeons,—itself.

14. This hard-featured philosophy has undoubtedly its profile and even its heart of truth. Otherwise it would not have been possible for Sir W. Hamilton to produce from the inexhaustible mine of his erudition that dazzling array of testimonies to the limitation of human knowledge whose *consensus* represents an immensely wider verdict—the common sense of thoughtful men. But I venture to think that what he has given us is the profile, not the full face, of truth. Partial truth, as we all know, becomes error as soon as it is taken to be the whole truth. And it would almost seem as though, as soon as a philosopher constructs a system, he falls under the spell of his own genius, becomes the slave of his own lamp,

and is condemned to see the orb of truth, as mortals behold the moon, always on the same side. The besetting sin of philosophic systems (and commonly their ruin) is that they pursue truth along a single line, or at most in a single plane. And as a single plane may give you a plan or a section of a building, but no true perspective, nor any estimate of its contents, so the solid globe of truth can never be surveyed from any single point of view. The fatal defect of the Philosophy of the Conditioned seems to me, that, while exaggerating the necessary limitations of our knowledge to primary principles, it represents (as does the Critical Philosophy likewise) as our *disability* that which constitutes in fact our *ability*, namely, the mutual relation of the human mind and the universe. Our knowing faculty is treated as our insuperable hindrance to real knowledge ; and limited or inadequate knowledge as illusion : as though a fish were to complain of his fins, a man of his feet, or a bird of its wings, as hindrances to progress,—chains holding their wearer captive to a single element ; or as if we should argue that we cannot cross the Alps, or circumnavigate the Globe, because we cannot soar to the Sun. It seems to be overlooked—a fundamental oversight surely—that the relativity of knowledge is a double relation ; a mutual adaptation of the mind and the universe ; and, further, that this relation is not barely intellectual : it is real. The intellectual relation reposes immovably on a basis of physical relation, and that threefold : the mutual relation of all things to all things ; the mutual relation of all things in sum and detail to every healthfully trained human mind ; and the mutual relation between each human mind and all other minds. Our knowledge is limited, because our powers are both

bounded and immature. The field in which we gather it, is limited by our outward senses and inward experience. But it is not therefore illusory. The relativity of knowledge in place of being a restriction on the extent of our knowledge, or a bar to its truthfulness, is its very basis. The more numerous and the more intimate the relations between our mind and other beings, material or spiritual, the deeper and truer, as well as more extensive, will be our knowledge. Death, since it will introduce us to totally new relations, will immensely increase and purify our knowledge. Were it possible for us to know anything, Matter or Spirit, *out of relation* to our own mind, and to all other things,—if the very notion were not a contradiction in terms,—such knowledge would be absolutely barren and worthless, since the whole value of knowledge lies in knowing how things behave towards one another and towards ourselves.

15. Metaphysicians, it seems, have always been trying to get *at the back* of knowledge; and this impossible quest has distracted them from their proper inquiry: What IS knowledge;—what its nature; and what its worth? After all, what real meaning is there in the high-sounding phrase, so often repeated, ‘Knowledge of things in themselves’? There are no *things in themselves*; that is, things without relation to other things, to the universe, to God. That which has no properties is nothing. But properties are all relative; as of oxygen to form various compounds by uniting in fixed proportions with almost every other element; or of iron to melt at a definite heat. What (for want of a more significant name) we call *Ether* may have a thousand properties besides that of transmitting the undulations of light, warmth, and chemical action; that is, undulations having certain rela-

tions to particular nerves, or to particular chemical states of atoms. It may, for aught we know, be the basis of matter. The more of its properties we actually know, the truer and more useful our knowledge of it will be. The more properties it actually possesses (whether knowable by us or not), the more fully and mightily does it exist as a part of the universe. But if ALL its properties could be destroyed, what would remain? Nothing. 'EXISTENCE' is not a vague mysterious Somewhat, which could remain if all properties—all relations, active, passive, or latent, to things or to mind—were annihilated. It is simply our highest intellectual abstraction, drawn from the generalisation of all possible states, qualities, potencies, and reactions. Existence without relation, substance without qualities,—like a magnet without poles, a line without length, a circle with no area and no circumference, a number that is neither fractional nor integral, neither odd nor even,—is as impossible in reality as in thought.

16. Are we, then, to deny not only the conceivableness but the existence of the Absolute? Certainly. The term 'absolute' simply stands for an intellectual generalisation. It expresses an attribute, and is therefore a relative term, standing for a thought (whether we are pleased to call that thought positive or negative), and nothing but a thought. We may say that God exists absolutely, or is the Absolute Being, if we are careful to explain that we oppose 'absolute' to 'dependent.' God alone has being in Himself. But 'absolute existence,' if we do not explain what kind of existence we are speaking of, is a phrase absolutely without meaning. And if we take 'absolute' to mean 'without relation,' then it is not simply unmeaning, but untrue, to say that

God exists absolutely. For since all other being whatever exists in the relation of dependence on God (not to speak of other relations, such as those of moral beings to His will, His authority, His love), it is manifest that God sustains infinitely numerous relations to His creatures. And even if we strain our intellect to think of God as existing in Himself when as yet other beings had not begun to exist; even if we do not raise the question of His relation to eternal duration and infinite space; we must think of Him as sustaining the greatest and most intimate of all relations to the whole as yet non-existent universe: that of comprehending it with all its undeveloped possibilities in His foresight, power, and will.

17. It is true, then, that knowledge is relative; that is, that it is conversant with things or persons in relation to self, to other minds, to one another, and to God. It is so because it is knowledge. All knowledge is composed of judgments, and every judgment implies the relation of two terms as necessarily as every magnet implies the relation between two poles.<sup>1</sup> But it is not true that this relativity of knowledge is any imperfection, circumscription, or disability; or that there is any conceivable or possible knowledge of *things in themselves*, as opposed to the knowledge of their properties and relations, which if attainable would be a higher kind of knowledge, and in comparison with which our actual knowledge is illusory. On the contrary, the inadequacy or limitation of our knowledge lies in the fact that comparatively few of the actual or possible relations of things to one another, to ourselves, and to God, are as yet known to us. Illusion consists not in this limitation, but in

<sup>1</sup> This view of knowledge will be examined and expounded in § II.

believing these relations to be other than they are. In a word, the relativity of knowledge consists in that correlation, mental and physical, of thought with being, and of being with thought, on which the possibility, certainty, and value of knowledge depend.

The doctrine, that because our knowledge is relative it is therefore confined to phenomena, I hope to show to be utterly fallacious, resting on erroneous views of the relation of phenomena both to thought and to reality.

### § II.—*The Nature of Knowledge.*

1. What do we mean by Knowledge? What is the definition of the term? What *do* we when we know; and what do we mean when we say, "*We know*"? The analyses hitherto offered of knowledge have been physical rather than logical. A physical analysis is the partition of an object into its components; as of water into oxygen or hydrogen; of the human body into its several tissues; or of a visible appearance into light and shade, colour, form, and apparent size. Such an analysis may be actual, as by decomposition, or dissection; or mental and verbal by discrimination and enumeration of parts, as when we distinguish the outline from the area of a circle or triangle, though they cannot be actually separated. A logical analysis discriminates not the parts, but the attributes, of an object; describing its nature, that is to say, that which makes it in our judgment to be what it is; and the *meaning* (or connotation) of the name by which we call it.

When this analysis concerns not the nature of the Thing, but merely the meaning of the Name, we call it Definition; but with this distinction, that whereas a com-



plete logical analysis ought to include all the special marks or attributes which distinguish the object from other objects assigned to the same class, in definition it is reckoned sufficient to mention one of these. Thus 'orange' is sufficiently defined as the fruit of the orange-tree; though our idea of a perfect orange includes a certain shape, colour, flavour, and other properties, quite as peculiar as the fact of growing on an orange-tree. So the properties of a circle or other geometrical figure are not expressed in its definition, but deduced from it by a chain of reasoning. A definition, therefore, is adequate if it serves its purpose of making the name defined clearly intelligible and its misapplication impossible. But a logical analysis is not adequate (though it may be correct as far as it goes) until it has enumerated *all* the peculiar properties of its object—the whole connotation of its name.

2. Examples of physical analysis of knowledge are found in Locke's division of our ideas into those of sensation and those of reflection; in the 'three operations' of logical text-books and in Kant's distinction between the 'matter' and the 'form' of knowledge, and the twelve categories or highest forms of judgment under which he supposes all judgments may be classed. This character belongs, in a word, to all those theories of knowledge which rest upon a scrutiny not into its nature but into its sources. Now, as knowledge has no existence separate from thought, of which it is wholly made up (unlike material objects or living beings, which subsist independently of our thought and are easily identified by a few marks, even though we be ignorant of their essential qualities), it is evident that until we have defined what this word 'knowledge' stands for, we are working in

the dark in seeking to settle its sources or elements. We are analysing we know not what,—perhaps knowledge, perhaps something else. Locke, with his usual honesty and boldness, has attempted a logical analysis or definition. Knowledge, according to him, is neither more nor less than the perception of the agreement or repugnance of our ideas. Which definition, logically argued from, leads to universal scepticism, and must therefore be rejected as involving an impossible conclusion.

3. One of the most brilliant and acute of metaphysical writers, the late Professor Ferrier, in his *Institutes of Metaphysic*, raises at the outset this vital question,—“*What is knowledge?*” Strange to say, he starts it, not to run it fairly down, but to warn his readers off from the chase as unlawful. The question he declares unintelligible, and the answer impossible, because the question may be understood in more senses than one. That is the very reason, one would think, why we should seek both to define the question, and to answer it.<sup>1</sup> Let us at all events try to hunt down this fugitive question, until it either lies in our grasp, or buries itself at some distinct point in its burrow of mystery.

4. Confusions threaten to entangle our first steps, which need clearing away. Foremost of these is the vague use of the terms ‘know,’ ‘knowledge,’ with reference to the whole field of consciousness, including feeling and action, as well as thought. Thus one may say, ‘*I know that face, but do not know who it is;*’ where the word is used in two different senses; in the

<sup>1</sup> I refer to Professor Ferrier’s book, not merely on account of its high qualities, and yet higher pretensions, but because this is the clearest avowal I know of, by a professed and accomplished metaphysician, of this fatal gap at the threshold. The result is, that his brilliant train of reasoning, shaped in forms of mathematical rigour, hangs on nothing, and leads nowhither.

first, for the feeling of familiarity or recognition, in the second, for knowledge properly so called. So persons speak of knowing a tree or flower by sight, when they really know nothing about it, except that it is a plant, beyond the fact of which memory certifies them that they have often seen it; which is really knowledge, not of it, but of themselves. So, again, it may be said, 'He has never known trouble;' 'He knows no fear,' meaning that the person spoken of is not familiar with these feelings. Such uses of 'know' and its cognate terms glide insensibly into the proper sense of knowledge, through what we term 'recognition.' "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." Here a twofold process is implied. First, dormant remembrance suddenly awoke of the familiar and beloved features, till then unrecognised (unless the phrase, "*their eyes were holden*" may mean that they were unconsciously restrained from looking at Him). Second, with that recognition came the whole host of wondrous memories, banishing doubt as daylight darkness; they knew WHO it was. So when we recognise a countenance about which we were in temporary doubt, all our knowledge of the person comes back with a rush. Now, since this process of recognition is in practice inseparable from the exercise of knowledge, and each new step in knowledge taken by the mature intellect is made by linking on what is new with names and ideas already familiar, it needs close scrutiny of our mental processes to fence off the exact and proper sense of 'knowing' from these loose and vague meanings. They are unavoidable. All we can do is to note them, and take care they do not mislead us. The simple but sufficient test is given in the syntax of the sentence in which the terms in question are used. When we would express

direct consciousness or susceptibility of a feeling, or a mere sense of familiarity, we use the verb with an accusative, as, 'I know that face,' 'He knows no pity.' The same form is used also of the act of recognition and of familiar acquaintance. 'You are so changed, I did not know you.' 'She knew Peter's voice.' 'I knew him well.' 'He has known better days.' But in these cases a proposition is implied, or a number of propositions. Thus, 'I know you' means I know *who you are*, know you *to be* so-and-so. In every case of familiar acquaintance a multitude of facts are implied which could be stated in distinct propositions. The test, then, is this: when the verb to know and its cognates are used in their strict and proper sense, they require a proposition expressed or implied. For instance, "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God;" 'The earth is known to be a globe slightly flattened at the poles;' 'I know more than I like to tell.' In all such cases our knowledge is neither more nor less than what we can truly and certainly state concerning the thing or person known.

5. If these examples should seem to any one tedious or trivial, let him remember that patient, humble analysis is the instrument by which all the triumphs of science have been won. It is the analysis of such common objects as air and water, chalk and salt, that has transformed chemistry from a superstition to a science. The investigation of so common a fact as the circulation of the blood did for surgery, medicine, and physiology what centuries of controversy never could have effected. The bane of metaphysics has been an ambitious treatment of questions in the gross. Surprising discoveries may yet await the metaphysician who is humble enough to abandon controversy and devote himself to painstaking observation and analysis.

6. We have established one mark of Knowledge in the strict sense, in contradistinction from vague though useful and unavoidable employments of the term. It is expressible in propositions. Whatever cannot be stated in a proposition, or series of propositions, cannot be intelligibly known. If known at all, it must be in the looser sense ; not by intellectual apprehension, but by conscious experience. Such is our knowledge of our own sensations, emotions, and all direct presentments of consciousness apart from memory. Every one who has looked with perfect vision on the sky and the fields, and who has been angry and sorry, knows what *blue* and *green*, and *anger* and *sorrow*, are. But he does not know them intellectually, as he knows that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that the British Constitution is a limited monarchy. The possibility of knowledge, strictly so called, arises as soon as any such simple presentment of consciousness enters into a statement, affirmative or negative ; as, '*I am sorry ;*' '*The fields are green ;*' '*Violet is caused by much more rapid undulations than scarlet.*' And with the possibility of knowledge arises also the possibility of error and of doubt. My judgments may be false or they may be dubious. Two further marks of knowledge, therefore, come into view : first, Truth, as opposed to error ; secondly, Certainty, as opposed to disbelief, doubt, and all those shades of belief through which assent imperceptibly brightens from the faint dawn of conjecture, or the twilight of growing opinion, to the noon of full certainty. The statements or propositions in which our knowledge is expressed must be objectively true and subjectively certain ; for we do not *know* if we are either wrong or doubtful. The knowledge so stated consists, not in the mere words of the proposition, but in

their meaning. Now the meaning of a proposition, the mental act of which it is a sign, is a judgment. Knowledge, therefore, consists in TRUE AND CERTAIN JUDGMENTS. The sum of such judgments which we have ever made, and can recall, is the sum of our actual knowledge; and our capacity for multiplying such judgments is the limit of our possible knowledge.

7. Consciousness, in rigid strictness of speech, is therefore not knowledge. For knowledge consists not in facts *per se*, but in our mental statement of those facts. What consciousness gives is the original facts themselves; the raw material out of which intellect spins the thread of thought and weaves the web of knowledge. Consciousness is momentary, knowledge permanent; consciousness incommunicable, knowledge communicable. Consciousness is the mysterious book from whose pages, as the hand of Time turns them forward and the finger of Memory turns them backward, and points to the fading yet indelible record, we have to decipher all our knowledge. Every phenomenon is a letter, every complex presentment of consciousness a word, meaningless in itself but full of meaning in its context, as read by intuitive discernment or interpreted by experience. Knowledge implies possibility of error, illusion, or doubt. Consciousness admits none of these, because consciousness *says* nothing, it simply *is*. It is, therefore, a mistake to speak of consciousness as either truthful or fallacious. Our *interpretation* of consciousness may be wildly erroneous. But as the presentments of consciousness are not judgments or statements of fact, but primary facts, they cannot be unreal. They are what they seem. What we are conscious of, we are conscious of. *Remembered* consciousness, however, is knowledge; for memory involves

judgment, and consequently the possibility of error. Memory, in fact, often deceives us, both affirmatively and negatively. Yet, faithful or treacherous, memory is the basis of all our knowledge.

8. If any one should protest against a definition of knowledge from which it follows that consciousness is not knowledge, and should maintain that we cannot be conscious of anything without *knowing* that we are conscious; and that presentments of consciousness have as good a claim to be called knowledge as our truest and surest judgments; I reply, first, that I am not disputing about the use of words, but pointing out a distinction in the nature of things, inattention to which begets a confusion of thought fatal to metaphysics. Secondly, that it is probable the objector has not sufficiently considered the transient momentary character of pure consciousness. When we talk about consciousness we commonly mean memory — *remembered* consciousness; for the present moment has become past as we speak of it, and its consciousness has become remembrance. Thirdly, when we speak of being conscious of *anything*, the expression implies that we have passed some judgment on the presentment of consciousness; some predicate affirming what we think it is, or denying what we think it is not. And even if my affirmative simply amounts to *I know that I am conscious*, still this is a judgment concerning myself. An entirely new presentment of consciousness, so unlike anything we had before experienced that we could affirm or deny nothing concerning it, would not constitute knowledge. Lastly, accurate verbal definition does not imply any censure of the popular use of words. Popular speech expresses natural modes of thought, or at least such as are easily and commonly

acquired. Inaccuracy is natural to mankind ; and therefore popular language is inaccurate, and always must be. Strict accuracy, either of thought or of speech, is a rare and difficult attainment. But no one who has not carefully cultivated it should write metaphysics. No one who does not feel its value should study metaphysics. Perfect accuracy is unattainable ; but it should be striven after. The terms, 'knowing,' 'knowledge,' and the like, will always continue to be vaguely and loosely used. But it has, I trust, been made evident that the knowledge whose nature we are investigating—that knowledge which is not compassed within the bounds of individual consciousness, and which is not born and does not die with any single mind, but is communicable from mind to mind, and under its three highest forms, of History, Science, and Art, constitutes the common treasure and inheritance of mankind—does not consist in sensations, images, emotions, or any primary presentments of consciousness, but does consist in those mental statements which we call judgments, the verbal expression of which we call propositions ; and that all true and certain judgments are knowledge.

9. Belief and knowledge resemble two circles of different sizes partly overlapping. Belief agrees with knowledge in that it consists in judgments expressible in propositions. It differs in admitting doubt and error. Our beliefs may be certain yet false ; or doubtful yet true ; or both false and doubtful. True and certain belief is knowledge. Such, for example, is our knowledge of countries we have never visited, and of events outside our own experience ; or the knowledge which even a scientific man has of experiments, observations, and calculations which he has not verified, but securely takes on



trust. The largest, though not the most vital, part of every one's knowledge is of this kind ; and the proportion augments as our knowledge grows. Yet we do not call all knowledge 'belief.' Primary judgments (such as that every change must have a cause) are often called beliefs, though 'intuitions' would be a better term. But a geometer does not say that he *believes* the angles of a triangle to be equal to two right angles. This distinction, however, is perhaps rather objective, that is, depending on the nature of the proof, than truly subjective. It is more important to remark (though the fact belongs rather to Psychology than to Metaphysics) that while Belief regarded as mere assent is intellectual, it extends likewise into the other two great regions of our spiritual nature. As an emotion or affection, and as a voluntary act, we name it Trust, Confidence, or Faith. Faith in the fullest sense—voluntary, affectionate, trustful credence—is the highest because the most comprehensive exercise of our nature.

10. What is a judgment? In Archbishop Thomson's admirable handbook of Logic, *Outlines of the Laws of Thought*, it is thus defined: "Every act of judgment is an attempt to reduce to unity two cognitions."<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Dean Mansel's definition is similar: "A judgment is a combination of two concepts, related to one or more common objects of intuition." (*Proleg. Log.* 2nd ed. p. 69.) A concept is defined as "a collection of attributes united by a sign, and representing a possible object of intuition." And yet Dr. Mansel had penned this golden sentence—a key-sentence, opening treasures of thought—that "As the unit of thought is a judgment, so the unit of language is a proposition:" a statement wholly irreconcilable with the definition of judgment just quoted. So different a thing is it to forge a key and to use it. It is true that he recognises primary judgments in which the subject is not a concept; which, as he says, are not *logical* judgments, and strangely distinguishes them as "*psychological* judgments." But he does not follow out this view to its just results, and his assertion that these first judgments are of *a relation between the conscious subject and the object*, appears to me a fundamental error fatal to true metaphysics.

is worth while to examine this definition ; because if correct as a definition, not of some judgments, but of all, it completely overturns the view of knowledge I am seeking to establish. For if every judgment includes two cognitions or acts of knowing, it is plain that every act of knowing cannot include a judgment. If knowledge be essentially judgment, there must be judgments any one of which, instead of reducing to unity two cognitions, constitutes a single cognition. The definition may stand good, and does, for a large proportion of our judgments, but cannot be accepted as an account of the act or faculty of judging.<sup>1</sup> Let us pause for a moment to look at this word 'cognition.' The steps of our thought are often entangled in the meshes of words, and what we take for subtil distinctions or profound discoveries are oftentimes but verbal confusions. Cognition may mean, (1) in the concrete, a particular act of knowing, noting, or apprehending ; or, (2) in the abstract, the process of knowing. In the Archbishop's definition it seems to be used in a third sense, as equivalent to a concept or conception ; which is the permanent form in which the intellect stores the results of its particular acts of knowing, ticketing them with names for future use. Every concept is a condensed judgment or crystal-

<sup>1</sup> "Toutes nos connaissances se resolvent en dernière analyse, en affirmations du vrai ou du faux, en jugements ; et il implique que le jugement qui donne la première connaissance, la connaissance de conscience, soit un jugement comparatif, puisque cette connaissance, la connaissance de conscience n'a qu'un seul terme, et qu'il en faut deux pour toute comparaison ; et cependant ce seul terme est une connaissance, et par consequent il suppose un jugement, mais un jugement qui échappe aux conditions que la théorie de Locke impose à tout jugement."—*Victor Cousin, Hist. de la Philosophie, leçon 24.* It has become the fashion to speak contemptuously of M. Cousin ; but the whole lecture displays admirable depth and keenness, as well as (of course) that translucent clearness which is the distinctive virtue of French literature.

lised agglomeration of judgments ; and the name by which it is ticketed is, in like manner, a condensed proposition or bundle of propositions. For clearness it would be better to confine '*cognition*' to the first sense ; using 'knowing' and 'knowledge' for the second, and 'concept' for the third. Employ the terms as we may, the main point remains the same : namely, that those judgments which merely reduce to unity two cognitions, are not primary judgments. In other words, when the subject of a proposition is an intellectual product, it implies a previous judgment or judgments to which it owes its being. Our analysis has not reached its limits till we carry it back to those judgments from which all others flow. These must be such that their subject is what we may call an *absolute subject* ; that is, one which cannot be predicated of anything but itself. They must also be what we may call *absolute judgments* ; that is, they must not imply any previous judgment. Singular propositions (as logicians call them) fulfil the first condition ; for a proper name stands not for *our notion* of a person, place, or other object, but for the object itself. But they do not fulfil the second, for they depend for proof upon other propositions. No singular proposition is self-evident. Primary judgments must be self-evident ; incapable alike of analysis, of proof, and of disproof.

II. A little further digression may in the end help us on our way. The assertion just made in regard to singular propositions and proper names directly contradicts the theory<sup>1</sup> that proper names do *not* stand for the persons, places, or things called by them, but for our mental conceptions of the same. Against this theory the appeal

<sup>1</sup> Maintained, among others, by one of the ablest and acutest of logicians, the late Dean Mansel.

lies to common sense: from metaphysicians writing philosophy to the same men, and all other intelligent persons, talking of affairs. It would surely be just as true to say that when I speak *to* a person I am only speaking to my concept of him, as that when I speak *of* him, I am speaking not of the man himself but of my concept of him. When I say that *Brutus killed Cæsar*, I do not mean that my concept of Brutus killed my concept of Cæsar. Twenty persons may have twenty different ideas of Cæsar—all more or less incorrect,—but they all mean the same man. If I ask where the rose I hold in my hand came from, and you reply that you gathered it in a friend's garden, our conceptions of a rose may be widely diverse,—as, for example, if you are a botanist and a rose fancier, and I am neither. Our sensible perceptions of the rose may as widely differ: I look into its crimson heart and inhale its perfume, while you, a couple of yards off, behold a comparatively minute image of the outside and green calyx of the rose, and perceive no scent. But we are both speaking of the same thing,—neither our perception nor our conception, but the real flower which, had you not plucked it, would be still growing out of range of our senses on the parent tree. The interminable disputes about Perception are another branch of the same controversy,—*whether things themselves can be the object of thought*. To a great (and I believe unsuspected) degree this is a question of words. In one sense, Yes; in another, No. An independent outward reality, whether a rose held in my fingers, or a man who died centuries ago, cannot be *in my mind* in the same sense as a sensation, a concept, or a name. Something in my mind *stands for* the reality: in the one case an assemblage of variable sensations; in the other an intellectual concep-

tion combined with an image, more or less indistinct, in my fantasy. But my judgment and its utterance in language—my mental and verbal statements—refer to the Reality; just as in an algebraic equation ‘*x*’ stands for the real though unknown quantity concerning which we are reasoning. Thought, our primary judgments excepted, is essentially language, though not necessarily verbal language. Wherever there is *meaning*—intelligible sense, there is *significance*,—one thing standing as the mental sign of another thing. In a verbal statement, the signs are words; but they are there not *as words* (*i.e.* articulate sounds or groups of letters) but as signs. Just so in the corresponding mental statement, the concept is there, not *as a concept* but as a sign; and any other sign which would serve the purpose might take its place. And it is because a proper name stands not for a concept, but in the same direct relation as the concept to the person, place, or thing referred to, that proper names have so great rhetorical force.

12. To return to our question: *What is a judgment?* A judgment is an assertion, affirmative or negative. Affirmation and denial are as the opposite motions of the same wheel; the extensor and contractor muscles of the same limb; the compensating undulations of the same wave. Each implies the other. Every denial affirms the contradictory of the proposition denied. Every affirmation involves innumerable denials. We may therefore simplify the question by looking at affirmative judgments only. Affirmation is one of those primary mental acts which neither admit nor require explanation. We are all conscious of it when we say ‘Yes’ to a question (as of denial when we say ‘No’). It is one of the mysterious touching-points of our intellec-

tual, moral, and voluntary consciousness. As intellectual belief passes into emotional and voluntary trust or faith, so intellectual assent passes, through deliberate affirmation, into voluntary and moral assent: the consent of the desires and the passive yielding or active determination of the will. But we are here concerned only with strictly intellectual assent or affirmation. Careful examination shows us that as in the assent of desire there are two elements,—the object and the emotion; and as in the assent of will there are two elements—the actual bending of the will, and the force (of motive, or habit, or of another will) to which it bends; so in intellectual assent or affirmation there are two elements,—the *act* of assertion and that which is asserted. To this last logicians give the name ‘predicate.’ Judgment is predication.

13. A Predicate implies a Subject. That is to say, in every judgment we assert somewhat of somewhat. It may be of itself: as ‘ $A = A$  ;’ ‘A man’s a man for a’ that ;’ or it may be of something else, as ‘ $3 \times 6 = 2 \times 9$  ;’ ‘Poverty is not a crime.’ In this last example it is evident that the subject implies previous judgments. We could never have framed the notion of poverty had we not previously judged that certain persons or things were poor. The same rule applies to *all verbal propositions except singular ones*; and we have already seen that singular propositions, not being self-evident, cannot be those primary judgments of which we are in quest. What self-evident judgments then does the mind possess, the subjects of which do not imply (as all logical concepts do) any prior judgment? I reply,—all those immediate judgments which the intellect passes on the presentments of sense, or the representments of memory and imagination. These presentments, or representments,

are not *cognitions* unless some judgment pass concerning them. Thus if I am passively contemplating two appearances, presentments of my sense of sight, there is no cognition. But as soon as I judge or mentally assert concerning them,—‘*They are two,*’ or negatively, ‘*They are not more than two ;*’ or pass a cluster of judgments,—‘*They are alike ;*’ ‘*They are round, green, small, smooth ; they are peas ;*’ at each step I have knowledge. An enormous difference, however, distinguishes this final judgment—‘*They are peas*’—from the others, which led up to it ; though by practice the mature mind performs the process with such unconscious swiftness that it seems a single intuition. Far from it. These previous judgments of number, likeness, figure, colour, size, smoothness (that is, equableness of surface), all have reference to the appearance or phenomenon itself, furnished by the sense of sight, which is strictly speaking *in my mind*. It might exist with equal vividness in a dream, and all those judgments would be as true as if I were awake. But this final judgment—‘*They are peas*’—would be false. It is a judgment of reality. It refers not to phenomena or sense-presentments, but to substantial outward realities—external existences, which can be *in my mind* in no other sense than this, that they can be in my thoughts : I can think about them. From the marks I discern in the phenomena, regarded as trustworthy natural signs, I identify the reality they stand for, by means of my previously formed concept, for which the name ‘*Pea*’ stands as the verbal sign. A thousand facts may hang in the mind of a botanist or agriculturist on the single peg of that small word. A vast complexity of further judgments may depend on its right application ; as (*e.g.*) if the finding a couple of peas in a man’s pocket be a link in the evi-

dence that he is a thief; or if the seeds wrongly called peas be in reality the fruit of an unknown, perhaps poisonous, plant. Such a general name is like a bank-note with which in a single second we can pay a thousand sovereigns, each standing for nearly a thousand farthings. The amazing multiplicity of judgments (indispensable preliminaries or possible inferences) involved in even so humble and common-place a judgment as 'This is a pea,' may suggest a reason why metaphysicians have commonly preferred the fabrication of systems and the waging of controversies to the patient laborious observation and analysis of the mind's actual working. It is so much easier, as well as more glorious, to build a castle in the air than a cottage on the ground; especially if you have to dig the clay, burn the bricks, and hew the timber. The air castle, if you build high and wide enough, may outlast the clay cottage. Nevertheless, whatever superiority fact has over fiction, the cottage has over the castle. And the plainest, commonest, humblest facts are precisely those most likely to reward faithful study.

14. In the selected example, a single sense is concerned—that of sight. The case is vastly complicated, but not really altered, if the presentments of other senses (as of touch, taste, smell) be brought in to identify the Object. In common parlance we are said to *perceive* the colour, taste, and other sensible attributes of an object. More philosophically (since to *per-ceive* means to apprehend something by means of something else) we are said to perceive the real object manifested to us by means of our sensations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Susception' would be a better term for "all states of consciousness which are simply presentative, not representative" (*Mansel*); passive states, in a word, which the mind *undergoes*, in contradistinction to that active consciousness in which the mind imprints its own forms on its *susceptions*, and *aliquid PER aliquid capit*, acquires a perception.



But the term 'perception' and the process for which it stands have been so obscured by controversy, and any critical examination of prevalent theories of perception would open such an immense field of discussion, that it is best to avoid the term, and simply say we *discern* the colour, form, number, and so forth, of the objects we judge to be peas. The phenomenon of colour is a pure sensation, the immediate result of the affection of the optic nerve by the action of light upon the retina. The judgment we pass in calling it 'green' is simply one of similarity: the sensation agrees with other sensations which we are in the habit of calling by that name. Visible form and size are commonly (though I apprehend erroneously) regarded as equally with colour simple impressions on the organ of sight. We say, '*I see they are small and globular;*' but on reflection every one will be aware that we do not *see* solid figure or real size (*i.e.* magnitude referred to some fixed standard) in the same sense as we see colour. Still more evidently is this the case regarding likeness and number. We can discern similarity and number in tastes, sounds, or feelings, as well as in appearances. We say in popular speech that things taste alike, feel alike, smell alike, sound alike, as well as that they look alike (or different). Evidently the faculty which in each case pronounces the sensations like or unlike, and which can also discern resemblance and difference in the presentments of different senses (as of intensity, duration, intermission, number, &c., between colours and sounds) must be a single faculty, distinct from the several faculties which furnish the sensations thus compared. The attributes by means of which we thus compare sensations given through different organs as well as separate sensations given through the same

organ may be called '*primary attributes:*' *q.d.* they are incapable of analysis. Each of them, therefore, embodies a PRIMARY JUDGMENT; one of those judgments of which we are in quest.

15. A psychological question here thrusts itself upon us. Are we right in ascribing the intuition or apprehension of these primary attributes, concerning which what I call primary judgments are formed, to the single faculty of judgment or understanding? Or does each primary attribute imply a distinct intuitive faculty? I conjecture that this is so; and that our *intellectual senses* are much more numerous than those bodily sense-organs through which the outward world reaches them. When I say, '*This paper is white,*' the white colour is a presentment of my sense of sight; but the judgment or affirmation is the act of my understanding or judging faculty. So when I assert of two circles that they are of different sizes; of two sounds that they are harmonious or discordant, or that one lasts longer than the other; and so forth. It is a very crude though time-honoured psychology which classifies our mental senses under the bodily sense organs which they employ. Our intuition of form, and our intuition of colour, both come to us through the eye: but they differ so widely that while the science of geometry rests on visible form, concerning colour we cannot reason at all. On the other hand, our intuitions of taste and smell, though received through separate organs, so resemble one another as sometimes to seem identical.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I cannot doubt that they are fundamentally one sense, affected probably in the case of smell by undulations resembling those of light; in that of taste by closer contact. One argument for the undulatory theory of scent is the marvellous rapidity and extent with which odours are often diffused. Another is the manner in which they may be communicated to

So again the sense of musical sound is really a distinct sense, though exercised through the same organ, from that of ordinary sound or noise ; the proof of which is that some persons possess the latter with scarcely a trace of the former. In like manner, some musicians have a most delicate sense of tune, but a defective ear for time ; others a most sensitive intuition of time. Yet our sense of time has no special connection with the ear, or with any other bodily organ : a fact to which may be attributed a vast amount of false metaphysics. Our bodily organs were arranged for utility and compact convenience ; not in order to teach psychology. A correct psychology, I apprehend, disregarding the rough classification based on the nervous system, would assign a distinct mental sense to every primary attribute ; *i.e.* every predicate incapable of analysis ; as colour, form, duration, pleasure, pain, and so forth. If this be so, a table of Primary Judgments would constitute at the same time a table of our intellectual faculties.

16. Strictly speaking it seems clear that the sole office of judging is to judge : *q.d.* to affirm or deny. The blank form (so to speak) of judgment simply predicates *subjectivity* of the subject :—“ *This is* ” . . . ; or, thrown into a question (the natural blank form of judgment),—“ *What is this ?* ”<sup>1</sup> The child’s insatiable questions, as

inodorous substances (as to an earthen jar), resisting every effort to dislodge them. A clear proof of the essential identity of smell and taste is the fact that both odour and savour may be communicated from one substance to another in its neighbourhood with no actual contact. Thus biscuits kept in a deal cupboard, or near a paper of ground coffee, will both smell and taste of turpentine or of coffee ; and sugar has become uneatable from being warehoused with casks of train oil.

<sup>1</sup> The strict logical form would be “ *This is what ?* ” Children, those unsophisticated metaphysicians, may, I believe, not seldom be observed putting their early questions in this form—“ *Dis what ?* ”

soon as he can speak, regarding everything he sees, feels, and hears, betoken the mental hunger with which his awakening faculty of judgment longs to fill up its blank vacancy. As each question is answered, the filled-up form is ticketed with its name and folded-up in memory as an addition to the growing store of knowledge. Coalescing with its subject, each new predicate furnishes a subject for fresh questions and new judgments. So knowledge grows from its rudimentary judgments—such as “*This and this are alike*”—up to those complex and comprehensive propositions in which the subject may sum up the discoveries of many minds and the experience of centuries; and one new predicate added thereto may put the keystone on a science or open a new chapter in human history. Still the *act of judging* remains the same. A strict classification of judgments would, I apprehend, be (1) as to form, into Affirmative and Negative; (2) as to the mind in which they take place, into Certain and Doubtful; (3) as to the relation between thought and reality, into True and False. Logicians have for convenience’ sake included in the form of the judgment a portion of its matter; that portion, namely, expressed or implied in every judgment; and have classed judgments according to the *quantity* of the subject and predicate, and according to their mutual relations. Metaphysicians, wisely or not, have gone much further, and have treated as products of the faculty of judgment those primary attributes, or objects of thought which are not furnished by our bodily senses.

Having indicated these questions, I do not deem it fitting to pursue them. Our present inquiry is not psychological but metaphysical: it concerns not the sources but the nature of knowledge. We may therefore deal

with judgments as elements of knowledge, without deciding what names are to be given to the faculties which enable or compel us to form those judgments.

17. On reconsidering 'the blank form' of judgment which is as the empty outstretched hand by which the treasures of knowledge are to be gathered—namely the question, "*What is this?*"—we find in it two elements, apart from which no act of judgment is possible: Unity and (if I may so call it) Substantivity—the capacity of possessing attributes.<sup>1</sup> "THIS" implies a single object of thought; and "WHAT" implies the possibility of asserting or denying attributes of the said object, the object continuing the same. UNITY or Individuality, and IDENTITY, are thus implied in this simple question. Of all our primary judgments, therefore, these must be allowed to be the most primary; the two preliminary attributes which must be apprehended for any further thought and knowledge to be possible. 'Unity,' let it be noted, stands here not for the notion of *total* unity—the unity of a whole made up of parts; nor yet of *numerical* unity as opposed to plurality. Both these, like all other distinct thoughts whatsoever, presuppose the primitive intuition of what may be called *identical* or *absolute* unity. Relative it is in one sense, but only in relation to the mind which contemplates and judges; not to other objects of attention, as total and numerical unity needs must be. It consists precisely in this: that Attention, which is the focus of consciousness, fixes on some point of the indefinite and unstable panorama of

<sup>1</sup> Not, of course, that the subject of a judgment (indicated by the word '*what*') must needs be a substance: it may be a phenomenon, an attribute, an idea, a word. But it is regarded *as an ideal substance* when we predicate of it any attribute; as "*Green*, though mechanically produced by mixing blue and yellow, is optically a primary colour."

sensation, and by so doing *constitutes* that point a single individual object. Inattention to this evident though subtil distinction has led to the error of supposing analysis and synthesis to be involved in the simplest and earliest operations of thought. Whereas these imply a more advanced stage of thinking power. The conception of Whole and Parts, and that of One and Many, are logically and chronologically subsequent to those of Subject and Attribute. Long before the infant can speak, the tiny outstretched forefinger pointing in rapid succession to surrounding objects, the questioning looks and the interrogatory murmur, mimicking without words the tone of a lively question, are the symbols of this germinant process of judgment. As yet the infant reason has not disentangled the two ends of a distinct thought or question. Subject and predicate lie rolled in one. If the child's thought were to be symbolised in our language, it must be simply by a series of exclamations,—“*There! there! there!*” As soon as the child is capable of understanding, and therefore mentally uttering (though as yet the speaking organs may not frame the sound) the question—“*What that?*”—judgment has become conscious of itself. Thought and knowledge have begun.

18. So far we seem to tread on firm ground. At our first step we appear to have succeeded in combining the two possible methods of investigating the nature of knowledge: the Historic and the Analytic. The Historic method consists in tracing our knowledge from its earliest germs to its complete development. Instructive as this method would be, it is beyond our power to follow it accurately or fully; for memory does not go far enough back in regard to our own mental processes, and obser-

vation is but an imperfect instrument in regard to those of others. Something, however, may be done—perhaps much—by carefully observing the language of children when they are learning to talk, and their gestures and various signs of intelligence before they can speak. The philosopher cannot become a child again and survey the path along which he entered into the kingdom of knowledge ; but he may sit and watch by the cradle and learn there some lessons which neither books nor introspection could teach him. Our main resource, however, is analysis of mature knowledge. We must scrutinise our consciousness,—the crude material out of which knowledge is continually elaborated. This is not a perfect substitute for Mental History, but it is the best we can get.

19. Consciousness is capable of infinite degrees, from a confused, twilight sense of *something* (as in falling asleep or in recovery from a swoon) to the full noon of vivid concentrated attention. If below the level of the faintest consciousness there be an underlying region of unconscious mental action, it lies out of the reach of our philosophy. Its existence may be conjectured ; probable arguments perhaps advanced in favour of the conjecture ; but it can neither be proved nor disproved. *Inattentive* consciousness serves important purposes, and forms a large proportion of our mental life ; but it could never constitute knowledge, and defies analysis. Attention I take to mean voluntary observation : the concentration of the mind by an effort of will. It is true that we sometimes *cannot help* attending : but this apparent inconsistency is not peculiar to the act of attention : it belongs to all voluntary action. Attention may occupy itself with the sum total of consciousness, sweeping rapidly from point to point, and seeking to gather a comprehensive survey

of the whole ; or it may select and take to pieces some definite portion of consciousness. For consciousness is always compound. In Nature nothing is simple.

20. Let us begin with the simplest thing we can find in consciousness. I am conscious, *e.g.*, of a sensation of pain,—suppose in a tooth. Attending to this single unmixed sensation, my reason discerns, as inseparably bound up with it, *duration, continuity* (or intermission), *quantity, intensity*, — and in both these last, *equality, increase, or diminution* ; and when it ceases, absence or *non-existence*, with *pastness*, or remembrance of it as a thing which did exist. If it be renewed, I have a more vivid sense by contrast of its existence (or *thereness*) ; I find it *like* or *unlike* ; and imagination (working spontaneously, and as it were secretly) attributes to the new pain an actual *identity* with the old. I say, “ The pain left me, but *it* has returned.” In this simple example two points are to be carefully noted. First, that no observation of consciousness is possible except through memory. There is no such thing as *time present*. Every smallest fraction of a second of which we can be conscious is a duration infinitely divisible into parts too minute for attention to seize or for imagination to conceive ; and our actual consciousness being thus fleeting, we could not think about any phenomenon of consciousness did we not hold it before the mind long enough to discern its properties. This we do by identifying our perishing momentary consciousness with its surviving image in memory ; and we can at pleasure either recognise the lapse of time and attend to the duration of the phenomenon, or disregard time altogether (as we do whenever we use the present tense), and treat our consciousness as though it were at a standstill. The second point is, that the subject of



these judgments (as in the instances given in paragraph 13) is not a logical subject, but is the very phenomenon itself of which I am conscious. They are primary judgments or immediate cognitions, incapable of analysis, spontaneous, and intuitively certain; and would pass equally if I had never felt pain before, and did not know by what name to call my sensation. In order to *describe* it, I must be able to refer the sensation and each of the judgments I pass upon it to some class or generalised predicate; for all names, except proper names, are names of classes. Thus I may say, "The pain was sudden, intense, throbbing, confined to one spot; after ceasing for a few minutes, it returned as a dull, diffused ache." But this is a question, not of the nature of knowledge, but of its intelligible expression in speech. These must not be confounded. All the wealth of language is meagre poverty compared to the subtil shades and varying shapes of consciousness. It would be as useless as impossible to assign a proper name to each object of thought. But it is only by fixing attention on the individual sensation or other object of thought that the mind discerns in it those resemblances and differences by which it can be ranked under some concept already formed, and thus intelligibly named.

21. If I speak of "*The pain which I feel*," a judgment of a wholly different kind is expressed from those already considered; a *personal judgment*. I not merely think about the sensation, I feel it, and know that it is *my* pain and not another person's. It is part of my consciousness, and I cannot attend to the pain without at the same time attending to myself. Reason assures me that pain is a thing incapable of substantial independent existence. It can exist only as a part of consciousness;

an attribute of a sensitive subject. Every sensation, emotion, or feeling, in like manner implies a sensitive subject or self; just as every thought implies a thinking self, and every volition (effort, consent, resistance, choice, and the like) implies a living will or personal self. As Descartes wrote "*Cogito, ergo sum,*" so he might have written, "*Sentio, ergo sum;*" "*Volo, ergo sum.*" Not only so, but I am conscious that it is one and the same self that thinks, feels, and wills. In vain does Hume or any of his modern disciples tell me that the self of which I am conscious is no abiding underlying unity, but simply the series of thoughts, feelings, and volitions which make up consciousness.<sup>1</sup> There are *three* series, not one merely,—a triple cord which cannot be broken; and there must be a hand that twists the strands; an axle round which the cord is wound as fast as spun; a loom in which the wondrous web is wrought; a conscious central self, without which the union of memory with hope, of desire with self-restraint, of the play of feeling and the conclusions of reasoning with choice and action, would have no possible existence.

Whether it be true in the strictest sense that I have a direct consciousness of Self, as I am directly conscious of any thought, sensation, or volition; or whether it is an intuition of reason (like that which asserts that two contradictories cannot possibly be true) which discerns the existence of the ME,—the continuous conscious Self; is a profound question which I do not here deem needful to discuss. Either way, the certainty remains the same, that while I depend on my sensations and other phenomena of consciousness for the *perception* of my own

<sup>1</sup> The irrationality of this theory has, I hope, been sufficiently established in Lecture II.

existence, they owe their being to Me, not I mine to them. This certainty is as positive as that of the truth of memory, or of the validity of reasoning ;—in other words, as any certainty attainable by the mind of man. It by no means follows (albeit this is the doctrine maintained by some of our ablest philosophers) that this personal judgment (as I have called it),—this apprehension of our personal relation to the sensation or other phenomenon on which our attention is fixed, is an essential element of *knowledge as knowledge*. In fact it cannot be, since it belongs to feeling and volition as much as to thought. It cannot, therefore, be distinctive of either, but must belong to them in common as forms of consciousness. Pure thought or knowledge as such is abstract and impersonal ; capable, therefore, of transference from mind to mind ; whereas feeling and will, like consciousness itself, are intransferable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The starting-point of Professor Ferrier's system is, that "along with whatever any intelligence knows, it must, as the ground or condition of its knowledge, have some cognisance of itself." (*Institutes*, Prop. I.) The student of Sir W. Hamilton's writings will at once perceive the bearing of the view I have advanced on his philosophy. The respect due to his eminent ability and prodigious learning demands that any criticism of his views should be careful and thorough. Such criticism my present limits forbid my attempting. I will only add to the brief hints of argument in the text two remarks. First, close observation of the minds of children during the first two years of life suggests the belief that the child has gained some knowledge of things and persons before he gains any clear consciousness of himself. His earliest words refer to persons ; his next, to objects, qualities, and occurrences. When he begins to speak of himself it is in the third person ; and when at length he learns to use the first person, the objective 'Me' is commonly (though not always) preferred to the subjective 'I.' Like a landscape painter, the little philosopher leaves himself out of his picture. Secondly, it appears to me not only conceivable, but probable, if not certain, that supposing a mind possessed of pure reason and perception alone, or of intellect and feeling (including sensation and emotion), but devoid of will, the purely passive and receptive flow of consciousness would awaken no sense of Self. Object and subject would lie inextricably entangled in the undistinguishable mass of sensation, emotion, and thought. Moments

22. What has been said of language (paragraph 20) applies to all generalised thought ; for all generalised thought is of the nature of language ; *q.d.* an intelligible arrangement of signs in which each sign (concept, image, word, or other symbol) stands for something other than itself. The truth of a judgment, therefore, depends neither upon the agreement of the ideas composing it (as Locke imagined) nor upon any resemblance between our ideas and the realities about which we think ; any more than it depends on whether the words for the subject and predicate are spelt with the same letters, or upon any resemblance between words, written or spoken, and the objects they represent. It depends simply on *the correspondence of the relation between the signs with the relation between the realities for which those signs stand.* If, for example, I judge or affirm any one to be forty years old ; this judgment, whatever be its grounds, is true if forty years have actually elapsed since the person in question was born, although there is not the remotest resemblance between the words ‘ forty years old ’ and the actual lapse of time, or between my conception of those particular forty years and his actual experience of them, any more than between the name by which I call my friend and the man himself. I might express the same fact in a variety of phrases,—as by saying that the earth has gone twice twenty times round the sun since he began to live ; but the judgment remains the same. And it expresses a fact, is a true judgment, or conveys knowledge, if it rightly represents the relation —perhaps the happiest of life—of intense thought and feeling are possible in which self is forgotten and seems blotted out. But we cannot put forth deliberate effort or any mode of intelligent will without self-consciousness coming into play. It is thus, I conjecture, that the child’s slumbering consciousness of himself is first awakened.

of the person spoken of to the preceding forty revolutions of the earth.

This simple example brings us face to face with the second fundamental question of metaphysics: that of the validity of knowledge.

§ III.—*Validity of Knowledge.*

I. On 'emerging' (as one has well expressed it) 'from the cloud of infancy' we found ourselves, like one who awakes with a treasure in his bosom, in possession of a store of knowledge, small indeed, yet containing the rudiments and foundations of all that we have since learned. We had our foot on the lowest step of the ladder whose top is in heaven. We had acquired a certainty, which neither reason nor experience could increase, of the existence in time and space of a world of realities, governed by causation, obeying or resisting our will, and fulfilling or disappointing our wishes and expectations. We had learned to distinguish Things and Persons from one another, and from ourselves; memory, imagination, and expectation, from present realities, and events from their causes,—or, as we expressed it in our simple phraseology, what happens from what makes it happen. At every step the ground grew firmer under our feet. Reality, which was the object, was also the test of our new-born knowledge; and as this grew and ripened, the seal of reality was set upon its validity; for the experience which nourished it (apart from which it could never have grown at all) was a two-fold experience,—not of thought alone, but of action guided by thought. When our thought was true, the hidden depths of outward nature echoed to its call, and the future came bearing in

its bosom the fulfilment of our expectations. When our thought was false, nature gave no echo, and the future brought disappointment and chastisement. We could not retrace our steps, and learn how we first became possessed of the treasure. We did not need to explore and analyse its nature, for its value was proved by its power over the things and persons which in our little sphere of life represented the universe. To enlarge it, to purify it from error, and sedulously to walk by its light, we found to be the primary business of life. We may express this grand lesson of all experience, to which every moment adds its swift silent testimony, either by saying that Truth is the conformity of our judgments or beliefs with the outward course of Reality; or by saying that the universe of Reality is built on Truth.

2. From the facts thus outlined, three conclusions follow of the highest importance with regard to the value and extent of human knowledge. First, that the historical analysis of knowledge,—the theory of its growth or formation,—important as it is to Psychology, forms no essential part of Metaphysics in that sense in which I employ the term, to wit, the Science of Knowledge. It bears to Metaphysics a relation like that of Physiology—the science of birth and growth—to structural Anatomy. Knowledge is knowledge, however we came by it.

3. Secondly. All attempts to criticise the validity of knowledge from the standpoint of a single mind must be fallacious, because no knowledge to which such criticism could apply exists. Knowledge, as we know it, is collective. Every mind draws from the common stock more than it contributes to it. Man's reason, like the rest of his nature, is social. Our knowledge is like a chain, which though it may be folded and carried in our

own hands, requires, if we would stretch it out and count the links, some one else's hand at the other end. Experience, as Kant says, is the beginning of all our knowledge.<sup>1</sup> But what is experience? Not simply the mutual action and reaction of our senses, will, and intelligence on the one hand, and of the forces of external nature on the other. From these alone, had we been left to them, it is impossible to say how much or how little knowledge we could have gained; probably nothing that could strictly be called knowledge, or that would have entitled us to be accounted human beings. Language, the key to the treasures of thought, was put into our hands by our elders. We learned to think, as we learned to speak, in converse with them. Even in the first hours and days of our separate life the most powerful impressions printed on our awakening sense were connected with those shapes and sounds—the faces, the forms, the voices of those who composed our tiny world—which fascinated our attention with an irresistible spell, and which, perhaps almost from the very first, seemed to peer out from the mist of confused sensations as if full of mysterious delightful meaning. I cannot help conjecturing (though it is but a conjecture) that in the first moments of human

<sup>1</sup> “Dass alle unsere Erkenntniss mit der Erfahrung anfange, daran ist gar kein Zweifel.” (*Krit. der r. Vern. Einleitung. I.*) But in the conclusion of his grand opening sentence, Kant concedes at the very outset of his analysis far too much to the working of outward things upon our knowing faculty; for the shoreless, ceaseless, unfathomable flow of sense-impressions and spontaneous emotions would never constitute Objects (*Gegenstände*) apart from the unifying power of the intellect (understanding, intuitive reason, the eye of the mind, or whatever else we choose to term it) exercised in attention; nor could all the forces which affect our senses produce Images or Representations (*Vorstellungen*) but by the innate power of memory and imagination, which they stimulate into activity. Of the working of mind on mind, as the most vital fountain of our experience, Kant says nothing.

existence, as often in later years, the heart outruns the intellect. Some instinctive yearning for sympathy and protection; some vague sense of distressful helplessness; some spontaneous love for the vision of a face and the sound of a voice (before as yet there has been time to regard any sensation as strange or familiar, *same* or *different*), may perhaps prepare the slumbering reason to penetrate the mystery of Reality beneath the veil of Appearance, and to divine the existence of living beings which the heart soon recognises as akin to itself. Perhaps it is true of the earliest germ as well as of the crowning fruit of knowledge, that the heart bestows it upon the intellect;—that to love is to know.

4. Thirdly. Knowledge, even in its first beginnings, is not of Phenomena, but of Reality underlying phenomena. Phenomena are modifications of our consciousness, actual or possible. But what the infant has come to know long before he can speak,—to say nothing of his knowledge of Time and of Space,—is not any series of modifications of his own consciousness, but living Beings—Persons—by whose power he finds his will forcibly controlled, and whose love, even as the outward sunshine gladdens his visible world, is the sunshine of his heart. The question whether the mind can transcend itself, and possess valid knowledge of real existence underlying phenomena, is one of those questions which never could be asked if they had not first been answered. The mind *has* transcended itself as soon as it enters into the communion of affection, will, and intelligence with other minds. And those other minds have transcended themselves to make this communion possible.

5. It may be replied (and the more any one thinks by system and the less by patient study of nature, the more



prompt this reply will be) that to the child, as to the mature intellect, the faces, figures, motions, and voices presented by sensation to his consciousness,—in a word, the Phenomena—*ARE* the persons, and comprise all his knowledge concerning them. This reply may be summed up in a pithy (though somewhat pedantic) statement of Mr. Spencer, that “I can construe the consciousness of other minds only in terms of my own.” Is this so? I think it can be shown that it is not so. First, as to the child. At a very early age the feeling of being alone distresses and terrifies him, and what he evidently longs for is not the reappearance of certain pleasing phenomena, but the sense of a protecting Presence. His Mother’s voice reassures him in a moment, though he may not see her; and in the dark, when he neither sees nor hears her, he is perfectly satisfied and happy if he feels himself safely folded in her arms. Could the suspicion enter his mind that a stranger had got hold of him, he would be in an agony of terror. He is, moreover, an instinctive physiognomist, and can read the expression of faces,—that is to say, the hidden feelings of which changes of countenance are the natural signs—before he is able accurately to discriminate the features. While his sense of form is still so imperfect that he will mistake a stranger in a similar dress for his father, a frown fills him with terror, a grimace makes him cry, a smile makes him crow with delight, and, while he loves best the familiar faces which he so earnestly studies, he is attracted by some countenances and repelled by others at first sight. His intuition of personality is, in fact, so strong that it overruns its bounds. He attributes personality to inanimate objects, and cannot help feeling as if the chairs and tables could see and hear him, and as if his warm bed

loved and took care of him. This tendency may be observed to survive, long after the mists of infancy have given place to the clear daylight of intelligence, in the habit children have of bestowing proper names on inanimate objects. Handed over from Reason to Imagination, it supplies in later years the most charming images of the poet and the most effective weapons of the orator.

6. But, in the second place, neither is it true of the mature mind that it can construe the consciousness of other minds only in terms of its own. I know that some minds possess an intensity of passion, others a positive vigour and iron stiffness of will, others an intuitive delicacy and prompt accuracy in discerning form and colour, or melody and harmony; others a power of sympathy with every form of humanity; others an acerbity and capacity of hatred and revenge: none of which I am able to construe in terms of my own consciousness. The phenomena present to the consciousness of those minds can no more come within the range of my consciousness than their sense of personal identity can be interchanged with mine. If it be replied—‘You are still employing here *terms of your own consciousness*, only raised to a very high power;’ I answer—That is true, if you choose so to express it;—but why? Only because my reason transcends phenomena, and assures me of the real existence of other minds generically like, but specifically unlike, my own, to whom a consciousness which I can dimly or not at all imagine is a living experience.

7. Were we attempting to construct a System of Metaphysics, our next step would be to consider whether the child’s mind transcends itself in its knowledge of Things, as I have endeavoured to show that it does in its knowledge of Persons.<sup>1</sup> But our present

<sup>1</sup> Compare § II. 10.

inquiry is simply concerned with the validity of human knowledge. And we may be consoled for the self-denial of keeping close to the matter in hand by reflecting that the ambition of system-building has been the ruin of philosophy, and that one main hindrance to the solid progress of Metaphysics has been the practice of dealing with Perception, which is the most complex form of knowledge, as though it were the simplest and most elementary; and attempting to frame a theory of our knowledge of the external world without first determining what KNOWLEDGE really means. The dogma that human knowledge is confined to phenomena, and that realities are completely beyond its ken, has its root, as I believe, in this mistaken method. It is at present so currently received as an unquestionable truth among metaphysicians of the most diverse schools, that to deny it will seem to many like denying a geometrical axiom; and the opposite doctrine, viz., that our knowledge is not of phenomena merely, but of realities of which phenomena are the signs, will probably seem to such persons unworthy of serious consideration. Nevertheless, if it be true, it will sooner or later be accepted; and the sooner the better, since it touches the very heart of metaphysics. Let us advance step by step, yet as rapidly as we may.

8. A phenomenon (or phænomenon) is an appearance or manifestation.<sup>1</sup> Borrowed from the sense of vision,

<sup>1</sup> Φαινόμενον. See Sir W. Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics*, I. p. 151. Perhaps there is scarcely a worse instance of the corruption of our language (arising, first, from the ambitious bad taste of persons who are fond of using long words which they do not understand; and, secondly, from the slipshod inaccuracy of those who really know better) than the perversion of this word '*phenomenon*' into the sense of '*prodigy*.' Even educated persons may be found speaking of a remarkable occurrence as "*Quite a phenomenon*." The corrupt use of '*transpire*' for '*occur*'—of which even such a scholar as Greswell is guilty—'*eliminate*' for '*educe*,' '*aggravate*' for '*provoke*,' are other examples.

the term has been extended by philosophers to presentments of the other senses, and, finally, to all presentments and representments of consciousness. A judgment, primary or logical, an emotion of delight, a pang of remorse, a bodily pain, a melody, a maxim, a scene on which we gaze, a picture painted in fantasy or mirrored in memory, a conscious effort ; everything, in short, of which we can be directly conscious—is a Phenomenon. Phenomena, therefore, are portions of consciousness, and nothing but portions of consciousness. But consciousness is fleeting, transitory. It would perish as it is born, leaving the mind blank as a mirror that retains no trace of what it reflects, were it not instantaneously photographed and fixed by Memory ; which, therefore, for practical purposes, we identify with Consciousness. The one abiding element of consciousness is the sense of *permanent Self*, which has no relation to time, to space, or to any phenomena in particular ; though without consciousness of some phenomena it is inconceivable that it should ever have been awakened. I perceive myself to be a widely different person from what I remember myself to have been at three years old, and at twenty-one ; yet I am conscious of being the same Self. Phenomena come and go. If I gaze on a landscape and close my eyes, the phenomena of memory take the place of the phenomena of vision. When I re-open my eyes, the fresh phenomena are so indistinguishably like those which I remember that I call them the same, though in fact they are as distinct as if ten years had intervened. But SELF does not come and go : it abides. Self, therefore, is not a phenomenon, nor yet a bundle of phenomena. It is a Reality underlying all the phenomena of consciousness ; and whatever knowledge or certain and

correct judgment I have of Myself (as that I have been in existence for so many years, or that at such a time and place I was conscious of such and such phenomena) is a knowledge not concerning phenomena, but concerning reality. The same is true with regard to other Selves. If other Selves exist,—and that they do is, as we have seen, not one of the problems but one of the foundations of our knowledge,—then they also are not phenomena, but permanent realities.

9. Phenomena are not knowledge ; but they become objects of knowledge as soon as any true and certain judgment is passed concerning them. In relation to the object occasioning it, or to the subject conscious of it, a phenomenon is opposed to reality as effect is opposed to cause ; but it may be regarded as a reality when we know that it has at some actual time formed part of the consciousness of some mind. And when, by means of memory, imagination, and language, an infinite multitude of phenomena are generalised and regarded as permanent, this kind of idealised symbol or concept serves as a *pro*-reality, which we can reason about as though it were real. Thus we speak and reason concerning ‘the blue of the sky,’ ‘the depth of the ocean,’ ‘the sphericity of the earth ;’ although ‘blue,’ ‘depth,’ ‘sphericity’ are names standing, the first for a sensation or class of sensations ; the second and third for definable concepts ; and therefore all these terms denote phenomena. But we conceive these mental abstractions as actual entities, and employ them as symbols in our reasoning. It would be easy to show by a thousand examples how largely our knowledge is conversant with objects of this nature. Geometry, Arithmetic, Algebra, Logic, for example, all deal with purely intellectual conceptions, that is, with

phenomena. Art, again, is largely occupied with pure phenomena. A great part of the painter's skill lies in the ability to see as they really appear the phenomena of colour and form presented to his eye in nature, and the likeness or unlikeness to them of the forms and colours he puts on his canvas. But Art deals also with the actual and intentional *production* of phenomena, and here steps out of the world of phenomena into the world of external reality. In fine, Knowledge itself, being composed of judgments of which we are conscious, and which *in that sense are phenomena*, may be regarded as a series of mental phenomena. But a judgment, like an act of will, is *much more* than a phenomenon. It is an act of reason, having a practical relation to the feelings and to the will. And to infer that because knowledge is phenomenal in relation to consciousness, therefore it is only conversant with phenomena, is like inferring that because a cubic inch is a purely intellectual concept, therefore a cubic inch of gold possesses merely intellectual value and qualities.

10. The line of analysis here indicated (which might be indefinitely pursued) may seem indeed to countenance the doctrine that knowledge is of phenomena alone. But this doctrine is contradicted and upset at the first step we take in the practical application of our knowledge. Metaphysicians perpetually argue as though human nature touched external nature at one point only—Perception. This is not so. We touch it at two points—Perception and Action. As we ourselves are not mere chains of phenomena, but living realities—self-conscious forces,—so we live in a universe not of mere phenomena, but of realities; that is, of intensely active forces, partly our masters and partly our servants. Be-

hind the world of Phenomena, on which consciousness gazes, is the world of Reality ; not like a statue far withdrawn behind a veil, but like a living form which, though veiled, embraces or smites, scourges or kneels to us. Act in ignorant defiance of Nature and she will crush you. Passively ignore her, and she will devour you. Study her laws, and obey them ; learn her secrets, and use them ; and she will place in your hands the rod of power, and faithfully serve you. Action is, therefore, the end of knowledge, and the test by which our knowledge is continually verified or our errors detected. And what is 'action' ? It is Will, measuring itself against the forces of Nature, or of other wills ; that is, against reality. Those primary judgments regarding phenomena of which we have spoken, would be an idle play of thought did they not lead on to judgments practically related to reality. Thus in so simple a judgment, grounded on the phenomena of colour, form, size, taste, and smell as that "*These are two peas,*" the conclusion regards not phenomena at all, but that of which we neither are nor ever can be conscious, namely, the existence within those two little smooth green globes of an invisible, wholly inconceivable power, by which, if they are sown in favouring circumstances, they will give birth to plants yielding in due time similar seed. If that judgment be false, all those which lead to it are useless. If it be true, it is true not for me alone, but for everybody. I can test it by sowing the seed, and Nature will bid the sun and rain and air and mysterious forces of life set their seal to its truth.

11. What, then, is the relation of our knowledge of Phenomena to our knowledge of the underlying Realities? Much like that of our knowledge of the alphabet to

our knowledge of literature. Phenomena are related to Realities as words to thoughts, letters or hieroglyphics to speech, symbols to sense. Such is the relation of a smile to joy, a blush to modesty, tears to sorrow, a frowning brow and flashing eye to anger, a tender look and warm clasp to love. Phenomena are the universal language in which Nature speaks to Man, and in which she responds to his rightly-directed will. Were that language capricious it would be unintelligible. If phenomena succeeded one another at random and combined without rule, knowledge would be impossible. Action and life would be impossible also. The steadfast regularity of phenomena tells with no doubtful significance of a corresponding permanence of the causes on which they depend. A 'law of nature,' as part of our science, or organised knowledge of phenomena, is merely 'a uniformity of sequence or co-existence : ' an intellectual generalisation of observed facts. But since our intellectual generalisations cannot exert the slightest control over nature, a law IN nature must be a very different thing. It must be a regulated force. Behind the screen of ever-shifting yet invariably regulated phenomena, stands the abiding reality of Force: not vaguely pervading space, but gathered in those centres of force which we know as particular bodies—solid, liquid, gaseous ; or in their elementary form as atoms—presumed absolutely unchangeable and indestructible.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of phenomena is the ladder by which we climb to the point where we leave phenomena behind. Those who most urgently

<sup>1</sup> The medium of the undulations of light and heat we suppose to be equally diffused through space ; but the forces of light and heat (so far as we know) start only from material centres. It is to these permanent causes of phenomena and centres of force that our knowledge, in its ultimate judgments, refers.



insist that our knowledge is confined to phenomena are compelled to add "*and their laws.*" But laws are not phenomena. Our highest cognitions, or acts of thought, with reference to Nature, deal with concepts—condensed or crystallised clusters of judgments,—which do not refer to phenomena, but to the causes at the back of them; and are true or false according as they correspond with the actual course of things. Our concepts of atoms and of light-waves may be taken as examples. A thought cannot indeed correspond with external reality in the sense of being *like it*. There is no more unmeaning question about which metaphysicians have done battle than the question whether *our ideas of things resemble the things themselves*.<sup>1</sup> Accuracy of thought, truth of judgment, validity of knowledge concerning any fact or substance, consists not in *resemblance* (which is nonsense), but in our judgment being such as that nature will avouch it; such that if we act upon it, nature will respond to our thought.

12. The verification of our knowledge is twofold. First, by the real consequences of our volitions, accomplishing our desires when we act according to knowledge, and terribly punishing our ignorance. Secondly, by the fulfilment through the independent working of nature of our predictions. Looking, as metaphysicians are wont, only at the intellectual side of our nature—at the senses, those busy labourers which are for ever bringing in at their several doorways the materials with which Reason, the arch-worker, toils to construct her fabric; ignoring the connection of thought with will, and of will with the results of action; we should be shut up to hang the whole weight of the validity of our knowledge on the

<sup>1</sup> This point has been glanced at in § II. 22.

trustworthiness of our faculties and our innate sense of certainty. Even thus, Scepticism finds no justification; for it is impaled on this dilemma :—partial scepticism is inconsistent; impartial, impossible. Two things you are compelled to trust—Memory and Reasoning. Without memory you would have no ideas at all; no knowledge either of yourself or of anything else. Memory may deceive, and often does; yet when its testimony is full and clear it carries with it certainty which nothing can surpass or challenge. Reasoning is often incorrect, and therefore misleads; but we are certain in all such cases that either the premises must be wrong or the argument faulty. Correct reasoning from true premises gives absolute certainty. And this certainty rests ultimately on the authority of Reason to pronounce by an absolute intuition concerning any two propositions whether they are mutually dependent, destructive, or incoherent. The Sceptic may challenge the authority of reason to give this certainty, but in so doing he denies the validity of his own argument and commits metaphysical suicide.

13. But we are not shut up to this implicit trust in our own faculties. Knowledge is power. And in that power is the charter of its authority as the guide of life, and the witness of its veracity as dealing not merely with phenomena but realities. Suppose you fling a stone or fire a gun. All the phenomena which assure you of the existence of the stone, or of your own act in firing the gun, might be present to your consciousness with equal minuteness and vividness in a dream, in the absence of any corresponding outside reality. But the moment the stone has left your hand, or your finger has drawn back the trigger, a train of events is set in motion—that is to say, forces are set in action in the external world, which

are as completely beyond your control as the act producing them was within your control. Nature, which responds to your action, takes no note of your wishes or regrets. Whether the shot bring down a pheasant for your table, or maim a friend, or waste itself in the air, depends simply on whether it is *well aimed*; that is to say, regulated by knowledge, the correspondence of which with the facts of external nature is thus verified.

14. As an example of the second mode of verification take the fulfilment of astronomical predictions. Nowhere is the contrast so prodigious as in astronomy, between the slenderness of the observed phenomena and the splendour, immensity, and certainty of the knowledge they reveal. The phenomena offered to the eye, many of them only by means of the telescope, and not reinforced by any other sense, are small spots of light creeping hither and thither in the sky, in seemingly unmeaning curves and zig-zags. The realities present to thought, and contemplated in the astronomer's elaborate calculations, are orbs of stupendous magnitude, balanced by mutual attraction according to a law whose formula is known, moving with inconceivable yet calculable swiftness, urged by an unchanging force, in orbits of hundreds of millions of miles, never swerving an inch but in obedience to fixed law. Suppose an astronomer calculates the period of a comet. His data are purely intellectual, with the addition of a blurred streak of light crawling from star to star, brightening for a few nights, then fading and vanishing. His calculations lead him to predict the return of the comet, say in a hundred years. A century rolls by, and a great grandson of the astronomer, with his ancestor's papers in his desk, sits watching the sky. And lo! at the appointed date, IT comes:

to the eye, as before, a mere tiny creeping streak of light among the stars ; but to the intellect of both observers, and of all well-informed minds, a mass of fiery volatile matter stretching through many millions of leagues, travelling at the rate of a million miles an hour ; emerging from that boundless deep of space into which it again retreats, which defies our senses and confounds our imagination, but where our reason treads securely, and from which this once dreaded messenger brings the 'Amen' of universal Nature to the validity of human knowledge.

15. The questions handled in this Lecture, and especially in this closing section, would demand for their just treatment a far larger scale of discussion. But I trust that for those who are willing to bestow sufficient study on what has been advanced, I have made good the following theses :—

I. That Human Knowledge, being dependent for development on language, imitation, and instruction, is collective ; implying in its very existence the mutual action of at least two minds.

II. Consequently, that no criticism of knowledge can be valid which proceeds from the stand-point of a single isolated mind.

III. That the Relativity of Knowledge involves a four-fold relation: (*a*) of each mind to outward nature ; (*b*) of nature to each mind and to all minds ; (*c*) of the parts and elements of nature to one another ; (*d*) of human minds to one another. Which inconceivably manifold relations must, if there exists an eternal First Cause, be embraced and grounded in the relation of all being to HIM—or to THAT—in whom we live and move and have our being.

IV. Consequently, that any doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge which takes account solely of the relation of the Subject to the Object, or of Reason to Phenomena, must be so defective as to be virtually false. ✓

V. That the Relativity of Knowledge, in place of being any impediment, disability, or limitation to our knowledge, is that which renders knowledge possible, and on which its worth and truth depend.

VI. That there are no "Things in themselves," out of relation to other things and to the First Cause.

VII. That Knowledge is composed of Judgments: the criteria of the judgments composing it being truth and certainty.

VIII. That our Primary Judgments have no logical subjects, but are predicated either of phenomena immediately present to consciousness (or represented in memory), or of those realities of which phenomena are the natural signs; namely, (*a*) Self; (*b*) Other Selves; or (*c*) Causes—that is, forces or centres of force—external to the mind.

IX. That while a large part of our knowledge is conversant about phenomena, our ultimate Judgments, in which the application or use of Knowledge lies, respect the realities underlying phenomena; of which realities, phenomena are the natural signs.

X. That the truth of Judgments, and consequently the validity of Knowledge, depends not on any resemblance of thoughts to things (which is possible in the domain of imagination, but not of reason), but in a correspondence of relations: that is, in the facts of nature being so related to one another as our judgments affirm them to be.

XI. That the Validity of Human Knowledge, subjectively assured by the imperative necessity we are under

of trusting our own faculties (notably memory and reasoning), is objectively verified, 1st, by the results of our action, which pass from our control into the outward world, and fulfil or disappoint our intention according as our action is conformed to knowledge; 2ndly, by the independent course of nature, which fulfils in its regular working all predictions based on correct calculation from true data.

XII. Lastly, that Philosophic Scepticism has no valid foundation; but that if the phenomena and facts of the Universe and of Human Nature be such as to afford adequate evidence of a Personal Eternal First Cause, there is nothing in the nature of Knowledge to blast this evidence with suspicion of untrustworthiness, or to hinder our knowledge of God from being the most certain, as it must needs be the noblest, the most fruitful, and the most necessary part of all our knowledge. For the eye of reason were a poor and feeble thing if, like the bodily eye, it could behold all things in the light of knowledge, but could not lift its vision to the Source of Light.

LECTURE V.

*THE ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE.*





## LECTURE V.

### THE ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE.

#### § I.

**P**URPOSE is the autograph of Mind. It is the track we follow when we wish to detect the traces of intellect and will. Under the name of 'significance' or 'meaning' — that is, the intent to represent one thing by another—it constitutes the difference between letters, hieroglyphics, or any kind of graphic symbol, and random blots and scratches; between speech and noise, between a work of art or skill and a heap of raw material. It is the criterion by which we distinguish wisdom from folly, the chatter of insanity or idiotcy from the inspiration of the orator or the poet; virtue from mere happy circumstance, and crime from misfortune.

By 'Purpose' we understand one or both of two things: (1) an intention existing in some mind; that is to say, a thought or idea, accompanied with the will to carry it out into action; or (2) the adaptation of means to the attainment of a given end. In the first sense, we say that the purpose to kill is the crime of murder, whether that purpose be carried out or not. In the second, that the purpose of a telescope is to magnify to our vision distant objects, of a knife to cut, of a clock to mark

time. By an easy and natural metaphor, the end or object to be accomplished is also spoken of as the 'purpose' either of an agent or of an instrument. When the end is gained, the purpose is said to be accomplished. In its literal meaning, therefore, in either sense, Purpose implies mind. Foresight, intention, the will to attain a certain end by appropriate means, can exist only in a mind. By 'mind' we mean precisely that which foresees and wills ; and it matters nothing in this respect whether we think of mind as finite or infinite. In like manner, that adaptation of the means or instrument to its use, which is a result of such will and foresight (as of a bequest to regulate the distribution of property, of a law to suppress theft or drunkenness, or of a loom to weave cloth), implies the past existence of a designing mind. What was in the mind a purpose to secure an end has become in the machine, or in the legal or other instrument, a practical adaptation—a sort of unconscious mind—by which it secures its end. In Plato's phrase, it is by virtue of its IDEA,—the thought materialised, that the thing is what it is: a box or a ship, a picture or a fortress, a poem or a constitution.

Simple and axiomatic as these statements are, and amiliar as they needs must be, seeing that they apply to the entire range of human activity, from the threading of a needle to the founding of an empire ; it is yet impossible to state them too clearly, grasp them too firmly, or scrutinise them too keenly ; because the whole controversy between Natural Theism and philosophic Atheism turns on the question, whether they hold good only on the limited scale of human activity, or whether they hold equally on the immeasurable scale of the Universe. For no one can be so insane as to deny that the universe

from its atoms and ethereal vibrations to its worlds and systems, is crowded with apparent indications of a forethought, science, and skill, compared with which those of man are scanty and clumsy ; and, in a word, with what look like the manifestations of all - pervading purpose, embracing the whole, yet not neglecting the minutest part. The task, alike arduous and anomalous, incumbent on philosophic atheists and *agnostics* is to prove that this immense evidence is as illusory as it is impressive ; or at all events that it is so neutralised by objections and difficulties as to justify and even compel our holding our minds, on the greatest of questions, in an even balance of doubt. Failing this, their position is neither intellectually nor morally justifiable. It is not only not scientific, it is irrational.

Apart from opposition, this argument is attended with two formidable difficulties, which it is well to note at the outset ; one springing from the limitation of our faculties, the other from their excellence. The first difficulty lies in the incomprehensible vastness of the body of evidence, the second in its purely intellectual character. As to the first of these difficulties ; the marks of design, or, to speak more plainly, the cases of harmonious adjustment tending to produce order, life, beauty, and happiness, pervade the whole universe ; from the planetary orbits (ruled by laws whose field of operation outstretches our perception and even fancy) to the waves of light and heat, of which several hundred millions of millions paint the retina or warm the cheek in a second ; from the solar mass to a midge's wing or a mite's eye. The proofs multiply as our knowledge grows, assuring us that its widest range will never discover any token of their possible exhaustion. It follows that in any attempt to overtake and estimate

this evidence as a whole, our intellect is strained and bewildered. A selection of examples must be made ; and whether they be chosen as familiar and intelligible, or as complicated and astonishing, or on any other principle, injustice is unavoidably done to the evidence,—or rather to the mind contemplating it. We fall under an unconscious but irresistible temptation to feel as if we had before us THE evidence of the Divine existence, or at all events a strong and favourable sample ; whereas the most beautiful or striking examples owe their real value to the fact that their testimony is backed up by that of the Universe, explored or unexplored. We do but catch some sparkles from the spray of the great tide of human knowledge : how little idea can these give us of the fathomless, shoreless ocean of which that tide is but a transient wave !

Yet there are minds which the very immensity of the evidence offends. Its abundance and variety beget in them a kind of intellectual indigestion. They point with derisive impatience to whole shelves laden with Bridgewater treatises ; and ignoring the fact that these do but give a comparatively small collection of assorted specimens of a proof whose validity turns upon its being not simply multitudinous but universal ; they ask why this argument is thus laboriously reiterated *ad nauseam* ; and whether there be not some more simple and direct proof, which may be clearly stated to the reason, without the toil of wading through a whole encyclopædia of physics, physiology, and natural history. The reply of course is that the Universe is the Universe,—that is, infinite multiplicity in unity ; and that if we wish to be guided by its witness, we must be at the pains of ascertaining what that witness is. Fully to state or adequately to estimate

the witness of the universe to the existence of a Creator is as impossible as to comprehend in our knowledge the universe itself. But at least we may give such a range to our contemplation as to raise it to some proportion with our knowledge of nature, and to give room and time for our minds to receive a just impression.

Mischief incalculable has been caused by the reverse procedure ; that is to say, by narrowing the idea of purpose as manifested in universal Nature within the range of a few classes of facts, regarded in a few of their relations, and represented by a few instances. A man cannot do greater injustice to his own mind and to truth than by dealing with this illimitable field of argument as it has been dealt with by the late Mr. J. Stuart Mill in those Essays which his friends, had they regarded his reputation as a philosopher, would have done well to leave unpublished. After a paragraph of fifteen lines of good-sized type, Mr. Mill writes : " I have stated this argument in its fullest strength." And in order " to test the argument by logical principles applicable to induction," he says, " For this purpose it will be convenient to handle not the argument as a whole, but some one of the most impressive cases of it." Most convenient, no doubt, this method is for an advocate sustaining a foregone conclusion ; but most inconvenient for a judge. Very convenient for a mere logician bent on verbal analysis, but highly inconvenient to a philosopher in quest of truth. Admirably convenient if the object be so to attenuate the argument that it may almost disappear under the rigorous logical treatment to which Mr. Mill subjects it ; but desperately inconvenient if the object be to expand and raise our faculties to some apprehension of the real extent and worth of the evidence.

Mr. Mill then proceeds to test the particular instance he is pleased to select—that of the eye—by the rules laid down in his excellent treatise on Logic, under the head of the ‘*Method of Agreement* ;’ a process of much interest and profit to the student of logic, but as worthless in reference to this whole argument as the pretence of ascertaining the value of a gold mine by chemical analysis of a small chip of ore, without regard to the quantity of ore in the whole mine and the variety of ores it may contain.

After remarking that in his opinion the argument from design is much weakened by the discovery of the law of the “survival of the fittest,” Mr. Mill admits that it possesses after all these deductions “considerable strength.” That Mr. Mill was gifted with an intellect of a high order, pre-eminently cultured, no one disputes. For that very reason, his having gravely supposed that he could state the witness of nature to a Creator, “in its fullest strength,” in a paragraph of fifteen lines, and scientifically estimate its value by applying some logical rules to a single example, is a very noteworthy proof that theologians do not possess that monopoly of blinding prejudice and presumptuous dogmatism with which they have often been credited.

The second difficulty inherent in this branch of evidence is its purely intellectual character. If the question of the being of the Creator were a mere problem of the intellect ; if it had no more direct bearing on the duties, passions, and interests of human life than a question touching the properties of parallelograms or the existence of planets round Sirius, probably the fact would meet with the same unquestioned acceptance as the law of gravitation, or that of the relation of heat to motion.

But in regard to all questions having a powerful moral and practical bearing, men not only have a marvellous capacity for holding mere intellectual truth in solution, without suffering it to crystallise into conviction, but desire and are satisfied with a different kind of evidence from that which addresses itself to the intellect alone. The heart, the will, the conscience, have a logic of their own: intuitions as instinctive and imperative as those by which reason discerns the relation between premises and conclusion, or the disproof of a statement in the proof of its contradictory.

I have ventured to say that the difficulty thus accruing to the Argument from Design arises rather from the excellence than from the limitation of our faculties. For it is man's nobility, not his defect, that the most lofty and commanding part of him is his moral nature, which will not suffer him to act upon mere conclusions of reasoning, unless his heart and conscience be also satisfied. It is true that, because what is noblest and strongest in man is capable of the greatest perversion, the just balance between the moral and intellectual sides of his nature is often destroyed. At the door of which love and duty were appointed to keep the keys, passion, prejudice, and corrupt self-interest make wrongful entrance. Imagination steals the dress and mimics the voice of truth. Reason is overborne and defrauded of her just authority. The evidence which would be lead in one scale of judgment is feathers in the other; and "the man convinced against his will retains the same opinion still." All this is undeniable; and yet it remains true that there are truths, and some of them supreme truths, which 'he that loveth not knoweth not;' which cannot be seen by the 'dry light' of bare reason, intuitive

or deductive, any more than the colours of the rainbow can be seen in the direct sunbeam ; but which it is the part of Reason to accept from the Heart, the Conscience, and the Will, and to enshrine among her most unquestionable verities.

It is thus, as it seems to me, that there arises within us a secret dissatisfaction with any purely intellectual argument for the being and nature of God ; a sort of inarticulate voice within the heart which says, " I ask for Wisdom and you show me knowledge ; I ask for Love, and you show me intelligence, power, skill ; I ask for God,—for an infinite Father,—and you show me a Master-Workman, busy from eternity with his work, of which I and all that I love are but minute and transient atoms." Thus, too, it is that the Sceptic, when the evidence of Design, and that in the narrowest and most coldly intellectual view, is presented as the whole evidence for Theism, finds himself able to regard the question as a purely abstract one ; and to maintain an easy equipoise and dignified 'agnosticism,' wholly impossible on any question which practically affects him.

These considerations point to three weighty inferences. First,—That the argument from Design, when presented in the narrow and merely intellectual view too often taken of it, as an inference from the skill and forethought visible in nature to creative intelligence—"from contrivance to a Contriver"—is unsatisfying as a basis of faith ; not because it is unsound, but because it appeals to our intellect alone, and does not touch that larger and fuller portion of our nature in which faith has its root.

Secondly,—If on a wider view we find that the marks of purpose pervading the Universe are in reality notes



of moral character, as well as of illimitable intelligence ; if, the more comprehensively we survey them, the more impressively we read benevolent purpose, not in mere details of construction alone, but in the co-working of all laws and all elements ; if even those apparent anomalies which interfere with happiness lend themselves, equally with the regular course of nature, to a higher end than happiness—moral discipline ; if that pliability of nature, arising from the complexity and delicate balance of laws and forces, which renders it amenable to human will, and whence likewise arises what we call chance, exactly fits with the idea of a superintending Providence,—a supreme, eternal Will ; if, lastly, we find that man's moral nature harmonises with the mute witness of outward nature, and equally bears the broad arrow of Divine purpose : then we shall have good and sufficient reason for regarding the Argument from Design, not as a separated and isolated proof, addressed to reason alone, but as a solid indivisible part of the Basis of Faith.

Thirdly, — The only really formidable objections against this line of argument are moral objections ; derived from those apparently anomalous facts which appear at variance with perfect wisdom and goodness in the Creator. These, therefore, must be honestly weighed and analysed. Meanwhile, although difficulties apparently insoluble act as a powerful disturbing force on conviction, they cannot destroy the direct force of positive evidence. The only method of countervailing the positive evidence for our belief in the existence and attributes of God is to show that this belief is a misinterpretation of the facts of nature, or at all events is not the only rational interpretation the facts will bear. To

make good this point many of the most cultured minds in England, France, and Germany have of late years devoted their energies with amazing ingenuity and vigour.

Discredit is sought to be cast upon the whole argument by the curt assertion that it simply amounts to the truism that 'Design implies a Designer.' Especially it has become the fashion to sneer at Paley's treatment of the question and to make merry over his introductory illustration of the watch.<sup>1</sup> He has been blamed not only for not doing what he never tried to do, and even what nobody at that day could do, but for not having possessed a different kind of mind. Paley's mind was not metaphysical, but forensic. He was wise, therefore, in letting the metaphysical argument alone, and dealing with the question in a plain common-sense way suited to the majority of readers, and in a clear forcible style which has made his book an English classic. Much of the criticism bestowed upon him appears to me unjust. But the stream of thought flows now in a wider as well as deeper channel than that across which he built his solid and workman-like bridge. It is not quite easy, however, to know what is meant by a "truism." The term is often used for a statement too obvious to need proof, but too barren or trivial to be of use in argument. In this sense no one who knows what he is talking about, if he be honest, would call the proposition that 'Design implies a Designer' a truism. For it may have more senses than one; and it is of vital moment in

<sup>1</sup> Paley has been censured for having borrowed this famous illustration without acknowledgement from a Dutch work published early in the eighteenth century. But Howe, a hundred years before Paley, had employed it with point and force in his *Living Temple*.

which sense we take it. It may mean that 'design' in the strict sense,—that is, purpose, foresight, voluntary adaptation of means to end,—*can exist only in a mind which wills and foresees*. In this sense it is the *major* premise of Paley's argument; and if by a truism be meant a self-evident fact intuitively perceived, then Paley's argument has the greatest advantage an argument can enjoy,—that of resting on self-evident truth. As such Paley regarded this proposition, and it appeared to him insanity to question it. But it may also mean that from the *marks of design*—the appearance of will and foresight in the adaptation of means to ends—we are warranted and bound to infer the *real existence of design* in the sense of *conscious purpose*. Taken in this sense it forms the *minor* premise of Paley's argument; which is a generalisation from all those marks of design which he selects to lay before his readers. If in this sense it is 'a truism' or self-evident truth, then all that Paley contended for is conceded, and his opponents have no case.<sup>1</sup>

But as the case at present stands, here is the very knot of the controversy. That perfect adaptation of means to ends is the all-pervading law of the universe, and that nothing exists in vain, no one is so absurd as to deny. The most determined positivist, monist, or agnostic, if he has to write a treatise on natural history

<sup>1</sup> "That which can contrive, which can design, must be a person. These capacities constitute personality, for they imply consciousness and thought. They require that which can conceive an end or purpose, as well as the power of providing means and directing them to an end. . . . The acts of a mind prove the existence of a mind; and in whatever a mind resides is a person. The seat of intellect is a person. . . . The marks of design are too strong to be gotten over. Design must have had a designer. That designer must have been a person. That person is God."—*Paley's Natural Theology*, ch. xxiii.

or physiology, cannot avoid using the language of what is termed 'teleology.' He cannot help speaking of function as purpose ; of the bee's proboscis as meant to gather honey, and the woodpecker's or ant-eater's tongue as intended to capture insects ; or of the design of roots being to draw up moisture, the purpose of leaves to fix carbon, the use of stomachs to digest, lungs and gills to respire, fins to swim, feet to walk, and wings to fly. But though he is compelled to employ these terms, 'meaning,' 'purpose,' 'use,' 'intention,' 'object,' 'design,' he protests that we ought to understand, and that he does understand, by them nothing beyond mere physical adaptation of certain structures to certain functions. He denounces as unphilosophical the search after final causes, although the idea expressed in this phrase must always be the guiding star of physiological research. His contention is, that from the adaptation of structure to function, means to end, we have no right to draw the inference that the end was foreseen and provided for of set purpose. Structure and function are correlative results of a natural process of evolution, by which organisms adapt themselves to their environment ; as it is evident they must in some way be able to do on pain of speedy extinction. The Doctrine of Evolution, together with the law of Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest, intelligibly explain the universe as it is, without the necessity of supposing any intelligent First Cause or superintending Mind. And to make so vast a supposition without necessity would of course be in the last degree unphilosophical.<sup>1</sup> In a

<sup>1</sup> An American writer quoted by Mr. Jackson (*Phil. of Nat. Theol.* p. 334) thus delivers himself : "The absurdity of the *a posteriori* argument for a God consists in the assumption that what we call order, harmony, and adaptation are evidence of design ; when it is evident that whether

word, the statement that "design implies a designer," instead of being a truism is a falsehood, or at all events an assertion we have no right to make.

These grave and indeed astounding doctrines, the comparatively rude precursors of which were acutely satirised by Paley, are more commonly supported by authority than by argument. The phrase runs,—“to accept the doctrines of Evolution.” A kind of œcumenical council of scientific men is supposed to have formulated these theories and given them an infallible *imprimatur*, which it is intellectual heresy (venial only on the score of ignorance) to question. We are constantly assured that “we now know” that all existing forms of life, man included, have been evolved, by a purely natural and necessary process, from lower forms, and those again from lower and more primitive, until our thought remounts through incalculable ages to the moment when inorganic matter first organised itself and evolved—LIFE. All that we do really KNOW is that certain very ingenious and eloquent writers having framed this scheme out of a very small amount of evidence and a very large amount of imagination ; it has been “accepted” with wonderful assent, consent, and popular applause ; and has enlisted the strongest of all influences—Fashion—

there be a God or not, order, harmony, and adaptation must have existed from eternity, and are not therefore proofs of a designing cause.” This is equivalent to saying that eternal effects do not imply a cause. It moreover utterly ignores the fact that the order, harmony, and adaptation we see around us, so far from having existed from eternity, are of quite recent origin in comparison with the immeasurable period during which our globe was incandescent, and those inconceivably vaster *æons* when as yet our solar system was not condensed from fiery vapour into form. Thinkers—as they must by courtesy be termed—in an attitude like this are beyond argument. Perhaps in another generation the denial of the statement that ‘design must have had a designer’ will again, as by Paley, be regarded as insanity ; for the present it passes for philosophy.

in its favour. If we are dull enough to ask for evidence, we are told that the cause is already decided ; the court has risen, and there is no appeal. The battle of criticism against tradition, of the future against the past, is already won along the whole line, though the beaten host yet encumbers the field. At all events arches of triumph are being decorated, and *non Deum laudamus* sung on all sides with tremendous enthusiasm.

Nevertheless it may be remembered that a great conqueror once complained that the English army never knew when it was beaten ; and perhaps something of this English infirmity clings to the partisans of the old faith. Victories so marvellously easy and rapid are not seldom followed by a troublesome reaction. Before a sepulchral monument is reared over the grave of Christian Theism it may be well to make sure that it is really dead and buried. If it be not only not dead, but not likely to die at present, it might be decent to delay a little the performance of its obsequies. With this view, before examining in what way the argument from design for the Being of God is supposed to have received its death-blow, let us try accurately to define what we mean by 'design,' and what is the full force and form of the argument, the outline of which has been already traced.

Six principal lines may be indicated along which we track the footprints of purpose or design in the universe: 1. Adaptation. 2. Harmony. 3. Law. 4. Beauty. 5. Significance. 6. Benevolence. Supposing that the Doctrine of Evolution could give an intelligible explanation of one of these, this would avail nothing, unless it can explain them all. And if the six lines of argument are found converging to one focus, the force of conviction

they will warrant will be not the mere sum but the product of their separate values. In the remainder of the present Lecture I propose to speak of the first of these branches of evidence.

§ II.

The adaptation of means to end is the most common and obvious indication of intelligent purpose. It is therefore what is commonly thought of when people talk of the 'evidence of design.' Adaptation may vary from a simplicity which might as easily be ascribed to chance as to purpose, up to a complexity which not only leaves no room for doubt, but fills us with amazement at the vast range of thought and foresight needed to combine a multitude of means, collected from various and remote sources, in a single end. If in looking about for a stone to break a nutshell you should find one of precisely the shape, weight, and hardness required, no one would from this adaptation infer that the stone was fashioned on purpose. If, however, the stone were wedge-shaped, having a sharp edge, a smooth polish, and a hole at the broad end suitable for fixing it on to a handle, no one would have much doubt that it was a tool fashioned for a purpose ; even though it might conceivably have been ground and polished by the waves and the hole drilled by a *Pholas* mussel. And observe, that although we should naturally suppose *human* workmanship to be proved, this is simply because we do not know of other beings, either superior or inferior to man, likely to make and use stone axes. If we did, we should as readily ascribe it to them as to man. The sole point of the evidence is, that from such measure of adaptation we

infer design, or conscious foresight and purpose guiding voluntary action.

Again, suppose any one for the first time to visit an observatory and intelligently to examine it. He will have (not a prevailing belief, tinged with a dash of possible doubt, as in the case of the stone wedge, but) the most absolute certainty that everything in the building, from the massy foundation-stones to the smallest screw in the telescope, or finest tooth in one of the clock-wheels, is governed by a single purpose, and is what it is and where it is in order to subserve that one purpose,—the accurate observation and record of the movements of the heavenly bodies. This kind of certainty is in no way inferior to mathematical reasoning. It may even be esteemed more trustworthy, as resting not on the correctness of a mental process, but on the intuitive interpretation of substantial facts.

Now the adaptation of means to ends, which dominates the entire universe, meets us at every point, both in its simplest and in its most complex form. Pick up a chip of wood, and examine it under a microscope. You find it made up of marvellously minute vessels, each of which has its use in conveying a very small portion of liquid through a very small distance ; to which purpose it is exactly adapted. But it is also fitted by its tough texture and thread-like shape to unite with countless millions of similar vessels in forming the wood of the stem, branches, and roots, and composing, in combination with millions of the various other kinds of vessels found in the pith, bark, and leaves, the substance of the tree on which it grew. Each microscopic cell or tube, from the lowest root-fibre to the loftiest leaf-point, has its own immediate use, and structure appropriate thereto ; and



at the same time its perfect adaptation, utterly useless without the co-operation of numberless millions of other cells or ducts, like and unlike, to the peculiar life of that particular kind of tree.

The tree itself, then, is a wonderfully complicated mechanism (though simple in comparison with the organisation of the higher animals), in which each minutest part has its work and use, and all work together to one end—the perfecting of the type or pattern of that particular tree, including the ripening of germs, from which other like trees are to spring. But the tree as a whole has relations and adaptations to the world outside of it. These adaptations run in two great lines, which we may call *upward* and *downward*. In the upward line we contemplate the USES of production ; in the downward its CONDITIONS : in the one the ripe fruit ; in the other, the soil in which it grew. Tracking first the upward line, we find the tree adapted to the wants and pleasures of man. It may be oak, ash, or pine, wherewith to frame his sea-going ships, his oars which bend but do not break in the rough surges, his roofs and floors and endless products and implements of skill ; or rose-wood, or mahogany, or sandal-wood, for articles not of mere utility but of rare art and adornment ; or some kind of fruit-tree, whose wild nut or berry, fitted for the food of birds or beasts, develops under culture an exquisite flavour, texture, perfume, and beauty, yielding to man not only wholesome nourishment but delicate enjoyment. The whole of this depends on infinitesimal modifications of those innumerable multitudes of microscopic cells of which the plant is composed. It is they who are our true ship-builders, architects, joiners, turners, gardeners, and cooks. The cells of which man's bodily

frame is from moment to moment built up, taken to pieces, and rebuilt, he has himself no power to call into existence. The vegetable world must first have gathered, prepared, and stored the material of which they are formed; and though the lilies toil not neither do they spin, like man, with conscious and weary labour, yet the flax plant, the cotton-tree, the nettle, the mulberry, must have wrought and spun for him before a thread of Solomon's robes could be woven in the loom.

Thus far, then, we have before us examples of two perfectly distinct kinds of adaptation: First, adaptation of Structure to Function, and of both structure and function to the growth, perfecting, and reproduction of an organised whole. Secondly, adaptation of the finished Product to manifold Uses—more especially to the use and enjoyment of man. In the first kind the adaptation is in some cases purely mechanical; as much so as that of the parts of a watch for marking time, or of a microscope for refracting light. It is to this class of adaptations in nature that Paley has directed his main attention; and wisely; both as being obvious and easily intelligible, and as most readily within his reach. The progress of science had not in his day brought to light the immense multitude and variety of examples which now crowd upon us in the discoveries of organic chemistry, physiology, and other branches of natural science. The mechanical adaptations found in nature, moreover, present the closest and most striking analogies with the methods of human workmanship. In fact it is this very analogy for which Paley is censured by his recent critics, as though he had originated it, and which subjects him to the charge of 'anthropomorphism'—that grand scarecrow of modern philosophers. Whereas

this charge should in common justice be brought, not against those who like Paley and Sir Charles Bell hold up a clear mirror to nature, but against Nature herself. Indeed, one is tempted to think concerning certain writers that they are angry with Nature for pretending to prove the existence of a Creator.

The second case of adaptation starts us on a new line, wholly independent of the first as regards the adaptation itself and the indication of purpose it furnishes. The products of organic growth, either while yet living and growing (as in the case of fruit-bearing trees and wool-bearing or milk-giving beasts) or when their own life is ended and they have ceased to exist as links in the chain of organised nature (as timber, corn, cotton, oil, the flesh of all edible animals), are found not merely to minister to human need and delight, but to form the very platform on which alone human culture can be developed ; without which man, if he survived at all, could only be what philosophers are pleased to say he originally was—a naked savage.

In this, as in every step of the present argument, examples embarrass us by their multitude. Pick up the first fragment of chalk or coal you see. The chalk, divided into its smallest parts by careful washing, discloses under the microscope innumerable little shells of exquisite workmanship, once the abode of life. Each of these invisibly small creatures, and even each organic cell of which it was composed, was as perfect for its own immediate purpose as the most delicate instrument human skill can fashion. Hundreds of millenniums ago these creatures, in numbers of which millions are units and for which arithmetic has no name, enjoyed in some primeval ocean their brief hour of life, died, and gently

sank. But not till their work was done. It was theirs to steal from the turbid waters their immense treasures of lime, atom by atom, and to store them safely, until, heaved up in mighty ranges of chalk and oolite hills, they should in due time invite man to build his dwelling, feed his flocks, and gather his crops on their bosom, to quarry their sides for lime, or to drink health as he rambles over their breezy downs.

As the animalcules (as we somewhat disdainfully call them), whose nature enabled and impelled them so to do, sucked the lime from the waters and hoarded it for us in the hills ; so the plants composing the mighty beds of coal drank in the carbon from the surcharged atmosphere, where no animal life could have breathed, and stored it where man finds it ready to his hand. In the dank hot gloom of those archaic forests, myriads of ages before the earth was fit to be the home of man, our furnaces and forges were being prospectively kindled, our steam-engines fed, our cities illumined, our dwellings warmed, and our Christmas hearths cheered.

We have but taken two of the commonest and most obvious instances of the work done by plants and animals in preparing the world for man. Yet into what secret depths of the remote past have they led us, and what an enormous scale of operation have they displayed, in which the primary agency was that of microscopic living cells! A chip of wood, in like manner, was the clue that led us into another maze of the same labyrinth, where, in her timber, corn, flax, wool, milk, and a thousand other products, living and dead, we see Nature not merely preparing and laying up in store for man, but responsive to his call and obedient to his will. He plants the timber, the corn, the cotton, and feeds the flock ; and the

wealth of which nature is the inexhaustible fountain flows in the channels he cuts for it, and increases with his requirements ; not merely satisfying his hunger and sheltering his nakedness, but enabling him to become architect, engineer, mariner, artisan, artist, writer, cultured man of science, and to lift the veil and draw forth by wise questions the hidden lore of the mighty Mother on whose bosom he is nursed.

The adaptation is there. That is undeniable. It is everywhere. It is the foundation on which human life rests. The only question is, What does it mean? Are we at liberty to say that it means nothing? It is one vast agglomeration of happy coincidences. Human life is what it is because we are so fortunate as to find ourselves in a world, which if millions of ages had really been spent in building and furnishing it as our home could not have displayed a more calculating foresight a richer bounty, a nicer ingenuity of thoughtful love. So it happens. But from all this we can infer nothing. This appearance of benevolent purpose is merely our subjective way of looking at things. We take the world as we find it, and make the best use of it, or of as much of it as we can get at. We burn coal because it is inflammable, not because it was meant for us to burn : if it were, why is much of it buried where we are never likely to reach it? Not all things show marks of being meant for man ; frozen and torrid deserts for example ; inaccessible mountains, and malarious swamps. Why then imagine that healthy and fertile regions were made for his convenience? Darnel and raw potatoes are poisonous ; why must wheat and roast potatoes be supposed designed for food? The flesh of whales and tigers was certainly not meant for us to eat ; why, then, that of sheep and salmon?

Well : we can, if we please, argue thus. We can, if we think fit, call this line of argument philosophy, and the opposite line anthropomorphism. But the question is, whether we are wise and rational in so doing ; and whether the instinctive judgment of common sense, stigmatised as anthropomorphism, be not in reality at one with the deepest philosophy and the highest reason. To my own mind, I confess, this question admits but one reply.

Turning our thought now in the direction of what I called the downward or descending line, we come upon a THIRD class of adaptations, wholly distinct from the two former. The tree from which our chip of wood was taken, of whatever sort it chanced to be, was adapted to the soil and climate in which it grew, and the soil and climate were adapted to the growth of the tree. This mutual adaptation of Production and the Conditions of production is another parallelism between the works of man and the works of Nature. Man's work is conditioned by the materials he uses and the circumstances in which he works. A house is one thing if built with durable weather-proof stone, and another thing if built with stone which holds the water or crumbles when exposed to the air. The same design woven in silk, cotton, flax, and wool, will give a very different result. Fair cabinet-work cannot be wrought in soft coarse wood. The smith must have a certain heat to bend iron, and a higher heat to weld it. Selection of materials and control of circumstances are as important in all works of art and manufacture as design and skill. In like manner the organic product—plant or animal—has certain essential conditions, of light, warmth, air, food, without which it could not live and grow ; and certain other conditions without

which it cannot grow to perfection. As plants form the platform for animal life, and plants and animals that on which human life rests, so inorganic nature is the broad platform of all life. The balance between the conditions and the perfection of growth is often very delicate and obscure. Who can explain why the beech delights in chalk, the oak in clay, the heath in sand; why one species of a genus loves the sea-side, while another species of the same genus grows equally well by the sea or far inland, and on any soil; why some species have a narrow range and others are citizens of the world? This mutual adaptation is to some extent elastic; but in every case it has impassable limits. Both plants and animals may be brought to live on food and to endure a climate surprisingly different from those natural to them; but date-palms will never grow wild in England, nor wheat flourish in the plains of Bengal.

This third class of adaptation,—*the adaptation of the conditions of organic life*,—which embraces the whole range of life on our earth, from the spinning of a spider's web, or the flutter of a gnat's wing, to the peopling and government of empires, bids us turn our view from organised beings to the great inorganic world of matter and force, the unchangeable stage on which the changeful drama of Life is played. These adaptations occur, not in single lines, or in narrow circles radiating from each centre of life. They compose a system, which includes the universal forces of light, heat, gravity, cohesion, chemical affinity; the daily and yearly motion of the earth, and inclination of its axis; the pressure of its atmosphere; the nature of every one of the elements composing it (several of which we know to be also elements of other worlds); the intricate relationship of all these

with one another, and the relations (at present utterly unknown to us) of life itself to the forces and substances surrounding it. Each living organism—every cell of which it is composed—is part and parcel of this vast and complicated system. The whole universe ministers to the growth of a straw, the lighting of a bird on a twig, the shedding and drying of a child's tear.

Another question therefore presents itself, which our intellect is not rationally free to ignore. Can we rest in the fact that this stupendous moving vision of life, conscious and unconscious, is based, like some enchanted palace built on the waves, upon the restless play of the blind forces and original forms of inorganic nature? Or does the idea of Purpose, which looks out upon us from every shape and movement of organic life, attend our path as closely when we explore the dark labyrinth of matter and force? Are we rationally satisfied to be told that life consists in the self-adaptation of 'organism to environment;' or are we not compelled to inquire how it comes to pass that 'environment' should be such as to allow 'organism' thus to adapt itself? Is design as truly visible in the prime elements of the universe as in its most complex structures?

One of the most fundamental conditions of life in any form consists in the relative proportions of elemental substances. The proportions of these are amazingly various. It is computed, for example, that one-third of the entire substance of our globe consists of a single element (oxygen); while of certain other elements, equally primary (so far as we know), faint traces alone have been detected by the refined analysis of the spectroscope. One cannot but suspect that there are other worlds in which these substances, all but absent here, have an important part to play.



It makes no difference whether we suppose what we call 'elements'—oxygen, carbon, iron, and the rest of the threescore and odd which chemists enumerate—to be original forms of matter, essentially independent and inconvertible; or to be metamorphoses of a universal primary element. For supposing such universal prime-element to exist, it does not follow that it ever has existed, or will or can exist, except under one or other of the forms in which it furnishes the actual material of the universe. Our so-called elements are, at all events, to all intents and purposes the prime elements of our world as it actually exists. Their proportions have no relation to time. They have no history. They neither improve nor deteriorate. They show no trace of development from any lower state, or capacity for any higher. Each elemental substance emerges from the longest series of combinations precisely what it was before. We reasonably infer, first, that all the atoms making up the sum of each element are absolutely similar and perfect; secondly, that they never were and never will be other than they are. They will exist eternally, unless destroyed or changed by some competent cause; and unless they have been called into being by such cause, they must have existed from eternity.

Now when we examine these elemental atoms we find them stamped as strongly with marks of artificial adaptation as the parts of a watch or the letters of a sentence. First of all there is that marvellous diversity, already noticed, in the proportionate numbers of the several kinds of atoms; and this diversity is the very pivot on which the whole sphere of organic life turns. Had oxygen atoms existed only in the proportion of carbon atoms, or hydrogen only in the proportion of

phosphorus, neither any form of animal or plant life, nor our globe itself, could ever have come into being. It may be said that another globe formed of other materials, might have revolved in (or near) our earth's present orbit, and might have been peopled with other forms of life. There may perhaps in some planet be living creatures which breathe chlorine and feed on sulphur and sodium. Nobody can disprove this; but this is imagination, not science. If we draw our premises from fancy we may prove anything. We must reason from life and its conditions as we find them. And what we find is, that the original quantities of the several elements, and their mutual proportions, are as vital to the entire system of things to which we belong, as the diameter of the wheels, the length and strength of the levers, and the capacity of the cylinders, to the mechanism which drives the loom or the lathe, or works the steam-hammer. The universe rests on arithmetic.

Secondly, these elemental atoms have certain properties common to them all, by virtue of which they unite mechanically in masses; and certain other properties, peculiar to each element, by virtue of which they unite chemically in distinct substances. Of the first sort are capacity for motion in space; capacity for heat; cohesion, with its opposite, repulsion, and gravitation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Extension and impenetrability, long regarded as essential properties of matter, are now perceived to be properties not of atoms, but of masses of coherent molecules. The old distinction, theme of so much controversy, between 'primary' and 'secondary' qualities of matter is in fact but a confused statement of the distinction between *intelligible* and *non-intelligible* properties; *q.d.* those properties which our reason ascribes to matter, and which can be logically defined (as figure extension, weight, number), and those which consist in impressions on our senses, incapable therefore of logical definition.

These proportions are relative ; weight supposing an attracting mass ; cohesion implying at least two molecules ; and so of the rest. We can form no idea of an isolated atom ; *q. d.* we can ascribe no property to it apart from its fellow atoms and the forces inherent in or acting upon them. This is still more evident in regard to the qualities by virtue of which each element enters into combination with other elements, producing compound substances ; the compounds of which, again, develop new qualities regarding which no conjecture could have been formed prior to experience. Previous to combination these qualities are latent in the atoms in a manner totally inconceivable by us. Perhaps we ought rather to say, the causes of these qualities are latent ; the qualities themselves having no existence until developed in the compound. Thus (*e. g.*) the qualities of sweetness, of ready solubility in water, and of fusibility at a low heat, exhibited in sugar, have no place in the carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen of which it is formed. So that the properties of each element, *as they come into play in the actual universe*, are wholly dependent upon other elements, and on the definite arithmetical proportions in which they and it are capable of combining.

Of these three kinds of intricately harmonious, endlessly various adaptations, all equally indispensable to the balance and working of the universe,—namely, the adaptation of living Structure to Function, of finished Product to Use, and of the Universe as a whole and in its parts to Organic Life,—Evolution can pretend to explain only the first. Of the second and third it can render no account. As a theory of the universe, therefore, it is hopelessly defective. By means of its two subdoctrines, ‘Natural Selection’ and ‘Survival of the

Fittest,' it is by many supposed to have inflicted a heavy discouragement—some say a death-wound—on teleology, or the doctrine of Universal Design. But these hypotheses have no reference to inorganic nature. There is no 'struggle for life' among metals and gases ; no 'survival of the fittest' among molecules. All survive and all are equally fit. The indications of design are not merely painted upon the surface and woven in the texture of all that lives, plant or animal. They pervade inorganic nature. They are recorded as in secret cipher on its invisible atoms. They breathe in the air. They distil in the dew. They are graven in the rock for ever.

But is it true that, even in that limited province, in which alone the doctrine of Evolution can find foot-hold, it has in any degree invalidated the evidence of Design in Creation? Let us see. The problem is, to explain that adaptation of means to end which characterises every cell, organ, part, and susceptibility of every living thing, with reference to the particular office it discharges ; and of the whole frame of each plant or animal to the circumstances surrounding it and the life it has to lead ; apart from the supposition of creative design. The other half of the problem,—the adaptation of the circumstances themselves to life,—we are for the present to take for granted. The proffered solution consists in the hypotheses of Natural Selection and the Survival of the Fittest. By 'survival of the fittest' is meant perishing of the less fit. Since plants tend to ripen multitudes of seeds and animals to produce multitudes of offspring beyond what the world has room for, it is manifest that vast numbers must perish. Hence a struggle, in which the weakest succumb. This gene-

realisation is far from being as sound as a scientific law should be on which so much is made to rest. The conditions of life are too complicated, their balance too delicate, for the rule to be by any means universal that the stronger and healthier creatures survive the weaker. In the case of seeds and fruits serving for food, the most perfectly formed and earliest ripe are the very ones most eagerly devoured. The plumed seed wafted on the breeze, or the acorn swept into some safe nook by the gale, may be not stronger but weaker than its companions consumed by birds and beasts. The rabbit which feeds furthest a-field may be seized by the weasel; the swiftest hare may be run down by the dogs, weaklier ones meanwhile lurking in safe covert. The bird of strongest wing may be driven out to sea by the tempest. The gnat that flies highest is the most likely to be snapped up by the swallow. The handsomest and best developed specimens of a species may not under adverse circumstances prove the hardiest. The pathway of life skirts everywhere the verge of death; life is a series of escapes; and the warfare of chance spares the strongest no more than the weakest. The law therefore of the 'survival of the fittest' requires to be accepted with so much caution, and the exceptions to it are so innumerable that it can be called a law only by courtesy. In regard to human beings it is notoriously wide of the mark. Among barbarous nations perverted notions of beauty perpetuate hideous deformities; while multitudes of healthy children fall victims to superstitious or immoral customs. Among civilised nations a large proportion of the handsomest and most vigorous in body and mind die unwedded or childless, or survive their children; while multitudes of the uncomely and feeble bequeath to the

world a degenerate but fertile progeny. It is not the fittest who survive.

But supposing the fittest always did survive; who *are* 'the fittest,' and whence comes it that there is any fitness to survive? The proposed answer to this question is the marvellously ingenious theory of "natural selection." This theory is avowedly based on the variableness of numerous species of plants and animals under skilful artificial treatment. One of the most wonderful and mysterious properties of living beings is the possession of *latent tendencies* which (so far as we know) would never manifest themselves in a wild state. Such (*e. g.*) are the tendencies of roses, asters, and many other flowers to change stamens into petals, or small fertile florets into large and splendidly coloured but barren florets. In these instances the nature of the case forbids hereditary transmission; but in other instances the properties developed under culture become hereditary, and by careful selection may be brought to a high pitch of perfection; as in the distinctive qualities of the hunter, the racer, and other breeds of horse; in the singular instincts of the pointer and of the retriever; in the marvellous varieties of the pigeon,—known to have been derived within some three centuries from a common stock. These varieties or races, though hereditary, show no capacity of becoming distinct permanent species. They need constant care to keep up the breed; and if suffered to run wild their descendants will revert to the original stock.

If we may venture to apply the analogy of these remarkable facts at all to nature, the idea suggested would seem to be that as the gardener, the husbandman, or the breeder is able by skilful culture and unceasing care to

bring out qualities latent in the wild stock, and thus evolve new and (to him) desirable races, so it may have pleased the Supreme Creator and Maintainer of life, to whom all that we call latent is patent, and to whose hand all the resources of nature lie ready, to modify the forms and properties of plants and animals in successive descents, so that all species of one genus, all genera of one order or class, may have had in the remote past a common ancestor; and even—if this were the plan on which He saw fit to work—all forms of life may have sprung from one simple primitive stock. Such a conjecture, though purely imaginary, is not irrational; and has nothing in it inconsistent with the idea of Creative design, as ruling from first to last the development of organic life.

It is needless to say that the theory of natural selection is widely different from this. It is an attempt to divorce *actual purpose* from *ideal purpose*. It seeks to explain the adaptation of each organ to its function and of each plant or animal to the life it has to lead, apart from intelligent foresight, conscious intention, and controlling will. Nature is regarded as self-acting. The fact being undeniable that living beings have in them a latent capacity for variation, so that—whether from known or from unknown causes—the offspring of any plant or animal may vary from its parents in slight yet important points; it is evident that these variations may be either to its advantage or disadvantage in the ‘battle of life.’ If to its disadvantage, it is presumed that it will the sooner perish. If to its advantage it will survive, and will hand down its peculiarities to its offspring. Given time enough and favouring circumstances, what limit is there to this process? What organs may it not trans-

form? What faculties may it not develop — themselves the germs of new faculties in geometrical ratio? What metamorphosis is beyond its power? The process is slow, but time is long. Once set going, with unnumbered ages of ages to work in, why should it not forge, link by link, the whole living chain, from the smut on an ear of corn to the cedar of Lebanon; or from a whelk or a sea-anemone to a lamprey, and the much shorter chain from a lamprey to Plato or Shakespeare?

Thus, for example, when we examine the climbing toes, long doubled-back tongue, and hammer-and-chisel head and bill of a woodpecker, we are not to infer that these were given to the sire of all the woodpeckers, because he and his children were meant to climb trees, burrow in their wood, and feed on the insects which haunt them. Some antique, unimaginable creature, a bird in general but no sort of bird in particular, gave birth by a freak of nature to offspring having one toe bent back, endowed also with an abnormally long tongue, prodigious beak, and strong neck-muscles. Equipped with these, the young brood betook themselves to climbing trees and pecking their bark. Natural selection improved these qualities in successive generations, until at length nature for some unknown reason stopped short, having elaborated the perfect woodpecker. In like manner, we are not to say that the trunk of the elephant was given him for its present manifold and delicate uses, any more than we are to suppose that the proboscis of a bee was formed on purpose to suck honey; or that wings were made to fly with, fins to swim with, or eyes and ears for seeing and hearing. Development has begotten use; and use in its turn, by the advantage it gave in the struggle for



life, has produced further development. Some huge tapir-like creature, in the dim dawn of mammalian life, gave birth to offspring with snouts so elongated as to give them a decided advantage over their congeners in laying hold of twigs or fronds for food. Happily their less favoured comrades refrained from mobbing them to death as monsters. Natural selection increased this nasal protuberance, developing by degrees a finger-like tip to the growing trunk, till (as in the case of the woodpecker) the process fortunately came to a standstill, at least for some myriads of years, in the trunk of the elephant, which perhaps even natural selection could not greatly improve. Strange to say, other offspring of the same mammalian patriarch found their advantage in the battle of life in the opposite direction. Natural selection shortened, instead of lengthening, the nasal protuberance, producing by degrees the snout of the hog, the square flat nose of the ox, and in due season the noses of apes and of men.

Why is it that it is so difficult gravely to describe this process, without appearing to satirise the theory? Why does the most serious exposition of it by its ablest advocates irresistibly suggest an under-sense of ridicule? The reason is that there is an incongruity nothing short of ludicrous between the suggested cause and the actual results. It is as if, supposing three yards to be a moderate height for a white ants' nest, and that it would be no difficult exploit to raise it three inches higher in a year, we were to speculate whether, in three hundred thousand years or so, a sufficient number of termites might not build the Andes.

“As man can produce and certainly has produced a great result by his methodical and conscious means of

selection, what," asks Mr. Darwin, "may not nature effect?" Surely before imagining what nature may have effected in the past, we ought to ask what nature is doing in the present. So far as natural selection is a real power, it must be incessantly at work, "daily and hourly scrutinising throughout the world every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all which is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being, in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life."<sup>1</sup> But what are the results of this constant process of selection? Do we see species branching before our eyes into varieties and varieties becoming stereotyped as new species? Do the geologic records of those antique plastic ages, when life was young, give us glimpses of the metamorphosis of species briskly going forward,—filling the rocky cemeteries with the remains of nascent genera and abortive varieties, the beaten competitors in the battle of life, side by side with those of their conquerors? Nothing of the sort. It is begging the question to say that the process takes place so slowly that we can see only the results. Does it take place at all? So far as we can watch nature at work in the present or in the past, she straitly restrains that latent capacity for variation, so freely evolved under the hand of man; and

<sup>1</sup> *Origin of Species*, p. 84. (1860.) Mr. Darwin, with what M. Quatrefages calls his "well-nigh chivalrous loyalty to truth," has himself pointed out not a few insuperable objections to his theory. His research and fidelity in regard to facts are as admirable as his style of describing them is charming. But as there are persons who regard the acknowledgment of a debt as equivalent to payment, and having smilingly presented an I.O.U. to their creditor feel the same virtuous satisfaction as if it had been a bank-note; so this highly imaginative writer seems to consider that to recognise an objection is virtually to answer it. Having saluted it and confessed that it is formidable, he passes on his way with imperturbable serenity.

builds an invisible wall of partition between the most closely allied species, and a fence of limitation around the most variable. Immutable distinctness is retained in the midst of resemblances, and unity in the midst of variation. Species, it has been well said, are "variable, but not mutable." What is there in nature in the slightest degree resembling the gradual but considerable changes wrought, within a couple of centuries, in the breed of the English racer or pointer; not to speak of pigeons or poultry?

One assumption appears at once so vital to this theory and so groundless, that it must not be passed over in silence. If genera and species have been developed through the self-acting process suggested, it follows that specific differences ought to be such as to give their possessors some advantage in the struggle for life.<sup>1</sup> Where is the proof of this, or how can such an assumption be reconciled with fact? The struggle for life is at least as severe among creatures of the same species as between rival species. Diverse genera are found growing side by side, while species of the same genus (which ought to have diverged at a later period than genera) are separated by continents and oceans. Closely allied species elbow one another, grudgingly or amicably as we may choose to fancy, even in spots to which one of them has a special claim.<sup>2</sup> Food and climate, to which Mr. Darwin assigns a comparatively

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Darwin himself admits not only that the process must always be extremely slow, but that "nothing can be effected unless favourable variations occur." (P. 108.)

<sup>2</sup> *Sneezewort* does not expel *Yarrow* from the sea-side, nor the *Sea-plantain* the *Common Plantain*. Closely allied species of *Potentilla* intertwine, so that a careless observer supposes the flowers of the one to spring from the trailing stems of the other.

slight influence on the mutation of species, are the main conditions of the struggle for life. And the advantage or disadvantage regarding these turns in a vast number of cases, not on structural modifications, but on those subtil and secret differences which we term robustness or delicacy of constitution. There are hardy and tender species ; but there are also hardy and tender individuals. An individual human being, or a whole family, removed from a damp relaxing neighbourhood to a bracing mountain air and dry soil, or from a bleak high level to a warm valley near the sea, or from England to New Zealand, becomes robust and long-lived ; whereas the former habitat would in a few years have proved fatal. These specialities of constitution may become hereditary, but they have no tendency to form new species. The almost microscopic differences which distinguish with a touch as firm as it is fine many species (as among *Compositæ*) cannot be even imagined to have the slightest value in the struggle for life. That struggle therefore cannot have produced them. On the other hand, the structural peculiarities distinguishing many species, as the giraffe's long neck, the ant-eater's tongue, the vulture's eye, the bee's proboscis, the water-beetle's fringed legs, do not merely give advantage in the struggle for life ; they are the very means of life. Without them the species could have no existence ; and their gradual development is as inconceivable as it would have been useless.

Time is long. The periods indicated by geology are vast. But to educe the present animal and vegetable creation from primeval zoophytes by the self-acting process of natural selection would have required not time, but eternity.

It is a safe prediction that the hypothesis of natural selection will have an immortal reputation as part of the romance of science. Its wide and prompt reception by scientific persons as a true theory of nature suggests very grave questions as to the educational value of scientific training. This could not however have taken place did not the theory offer a brilliant and attractive generalisation, under which a large number of important facts may conveniently be grouped. Imagination is as needful to the man of science as to the painter or poet, and to a richly imaginative mind, prepossessed with this idea, and willing lightly to pass over all stubbornly irreconcilable facts as mere difficulties, not disproofs, the facts thus grouped (being both true and valuable) present themselves in the guise of irresistible evidence.

When Mr. Darwin says that those who do not accept his view of the origin of the stripes sometimes seen on horses "make the works of God a mere mockery and deception" (p. 167), he uses certainly very strong and, I think, unwarrantable language. But when he or any one else asks, Do the facts mean nothing?—the answer is that undoubtedly they mean a great deal, whether we guess their meaning aright or no.

The identity of structure which any one may perceive who looks at the skeleton of a man and of a monkey side by side; the fundamental identity of the bones variously framed into the human hand, the horse's fore-leg, the tiger's paw, the bat's wing, the whale's fin; the mysterious stages of resemblance to lower animals in the embryo of mammalia; the occurrence of useless parts and abortive organs (such as the claws beneath the skin of certain serpents, or the eye of the Gold-green Mole); the occasional occurrence of superfluous muscles

(even in the human body), corresponding with useful muscles in some allied genus, and of unusual markings on the skin answering to the permanent markings of other species; the curiously minute though constant differences marking certain species; these and such-like facts have undoubtedly a meaning. Whether we can decipher the hieroglyphic in which this meaning is written is another question. The meaning naturally suggested is, that Creation is based on a vast unity of plan, a comprehensive system of work, embracing the highest with the lowest forms of life; the earliest bubbles that rose from its hidden fount into air and light, with the latest wave of that immeasurable river of life which bathes the world with beauty and gladness. If in the unfolding of this scheme we can trace a constant progress, parallel with the growing preparation of the Globe to receive its full complement of life; if lower forms preceded higher, and contained dim prophecies of their successors; if some of those lower forms attained gigantic proportions and reigned as lords of earth during those periods when the globe was best fitted for their mode of life, and afterwards shrank into a humble and obscure rank in creation; if, finally, those ancient prophets of better things to come, by their life and by their death, helped to prepare the earth for man, "the roof and crown of things:" what is either so natural or so rational as to see in all this the working of a supreme Wisdom, Will, and Purpose, foreseeing and preparing the end from the beginning? What can be more arbitrary and unphilosophical than to substitute for this intelligible cause, crowning with the harmony of a perfect analogy the arch of human knowledge, the hypothesis of an utterly unintelligible Principle of Development, an im-

manent necessity of progress (the Fate of the ancient Stoics); or the blank absurdity of blind purpose and unconscious intelligence?

Setting religion altogether out of question, what can philosophy gain by substituting the unintelligible for the intelligible; a random guess about the unknowable for an inference by analogy from what is known; words for ideas, and nonsense for meaning? For if the respect due to eminent writers will permit us to speak the plain truth, 'the Unknowable' is as meaningless a phrase as 'the Inconsequential,' 'the Incommensurable,' or 'the Imperceptible;' and 'unconscious intelligence' is as inconceivable as a round square or a ten-sided triangle. That which foresees must see, and sight is consciousness. Science, we are told, resents mystery; but mystery is in any case preferable to absurdity. Reason may well bear to be reminded of its limits, but it cannot brook contradiction.

To this sublime contemplation of a unity of plan, both in form and in time, pervading the world of organic life, have we sufficient ground for adding any theory of the process, through which its present state of development has been reached? Certainly we seem warranted in affirming that there is not only an ideal unity of plan, but a mysterious unity of working in the process by which actual living forms grow from their rudimentary germs to their complete symmetry. Take as one typical example the *Pleuronectidæ*, or flat fishes; in which at a certain stage in the growth of the infant sole or turbot, the eye belonging to what is to be the under-side of the fish is twisted round to the other side, where alone it can be of any use. To the same class of facts belong not only those wonderful transformations in

which lower forms of organisation are temporarily assumed as steps towards the perfect form, but also cases of abortive or superfluous organs. All these unmistakably point to a deep-lying unity in the process by which the bewildering multiplicity of living forms is wrought out. This conclusion is strongly sustained, first, by the fact that "the physical basis of life," the *protoplast*, or raw material out of which all living forms are built up, is the same in all; secondly, by the latent capacity of variation, giving rise, under skilful artificial treatment, to breeds of plants and animals far more diverse from one another (as well as from their parent stocks) than many natural species; thirdly, by the native tendency in these varieties or races to revert to the ancestral type. But to assume that these highly artificial processes, by which man secures results of immense value to himself, but valueless (often, as in the case of double flowers, destructive) to the creatures thus artificially modified, is the type of Nature's process in quest of her offspring's well-being; or that the rise of unstable varieties supplies the key to the origin of immutable genera and species; or, finally, that the existence of resemblances and homologies, permanent or monstrous, is explicable only by reversion to some ancestral type: to assume all this, is certainly to make an enormous demand on faith. Viewed in the dry light of cool criticism, the theory of the descent of existing plants and animals, including man, by transmutation from lower types, effected by natural selection, is neither a deduction from ascertained causes, nor an induction from ascertained facts, but an excursion into the realm of the unknown. Its principal if not sole evidence is the strong subjective persuasion, borne in upon the minds of



those eminent men of science who espouse this theory, that so it must have been. It is therefore neither science nor philosophy, but romance.

The broad fact remains, like a rock among the surges, unshaken by any of these bold speculations, that while varieties and races are unstable, except under the continued action of those circumstances under which they arose ; freely intermingling, and if left to nature's training reverting to the ancestral type ; species, even when so closely allied as to perplex the naturalist to define their microscopic differences, maintain their type unchanged through ages. To confirm and improve that type, not to corrupt it, must surely be the sole use and practical result of "natural selection." Never can it overleap those invisible, elastic, yet indestructible barriers, fencing off, as they did even in geologic ages, species from species. Otherwise how and why do species endure ? The diverse breeds of dogs, pigeons, poultry, mostly of recent origin, kept true only by sedulous care, with their indescribable mongrel offspring, are but samples of the boundless confusion which must from the beginning of things have filled the world. The one fatal and insuperable objection to the theory of the origin of genera and species by natural selection is—the existence of genera and species.

Where all is unknown, imagination is free. Nothing, therefore, debars us from constructing an imaginary history of the process by which the ranks of the great army of life were filled up. Place side by side the egg of a starling and of a thrush. No examination, microscopic or chemical, can disclose any reason why, simply on the application of gentle heat for a fixed number of days, from the one egg shall emerge a bird with plumage

of metallic gloss that walks and chatters ; from the other a bird with dull brown feathers that hops and sings. Why a bird at all ? You can only say that the law of nature is that the offspring shall resemble the parent. True. But may not the law have formerly been the reverse,—that offspring should *not* resemble the parent ? It is as easy to imagine that when the time arrived for their entrance on the stage of life, birds were hatched from the eggs of reptiles, and the rose, the plum, and the apple caused to spring from the seed of a single stock, as to imagine that every species had a separate origin. Perhaps easier. Or, again, it is easy to imagine the earliest forms of living beings, vegetable or animal—forms, not types—endowed with boundless plasticity of structure, habit and function ; until the requisite number of types having been developed, those invisible fences were set up which separate class from class, kind from kind. Suppose we accept either theory, under any modification. What then ? We have merely pictured to ourselves, sagaciously or otherwise, the process of creation. We have neither thrown any light, even imaginary, on the mystery of its origin, nor cast any obscurity on its actual existing product. The earth with its wealth of life is here. The impassable barriers parting species from species have been set up. Each ancestral type is handed down, a divine heirloom, to all generations. The systematic unity which we shadow forth in the very terms ‘animal and vegetable kingdoms’ is a palpable fact. So is the adaptation, subserved alike by individual atoms and by universal laws, of animal and vegetable life to each another and to the globe and the solar system. Equally plain and unmistakable is the adaptation of the frame and of every part

of each plant and animal to the life it has to lead ; and, again, the adaptation of the whole vast frame of things to the maintenance, well-being, delight, and (what naturalists should be the last to overlook) instruction of man. Supposing that in all this we have proof of the existence and incessant control of an All-wise, All-powerful, and Beneficent Creator ; then this proof can in no way be affected by our ignorance respecting the process by which things came to be as they are, or by our fancies as to what it may have been. We may reasonably feel sure that if we knew the process—its results being what we see—this knowledge would enlarge and glorify the evidence. But the basis furnished by this evidence for faith cannot be shaken by any hypothesis as to the exact series of stages through which the universe has travelled thus far on its journey.

Suppose we could watch the building of some magnificent palace or minster, from the quarrying of the first block and hewing of the first timber to the carving of the last moulding and the placing of the last touch of gilding ; and that we were able minutely to explain the process : this would in no way affect the fact that the whole building, in its vast and graceful proportions, and in its minutest measurements, lived in the architect's brain, and lay pictured in his portfolio, before the first stroke of axe or chisel was struck. In his book all its members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. In his mind the calculations were worked out which gave meaning and purpose to the daily labour of every workman. The more numerous the workers, the more complicated the process, the more powerful and regular the forces of nature enlisted in the service, so much the

more do we admire the genius, foresight, and skill of the master-builder. None the less, but all the more, do we recognise in the whole fabric, from its massy foundations to its airy pinnacles, a lasting monument to his praise.

Just as little can any success we may achieve in deciphering the dim records of the Past concerning the building of this glorious palace and temple of the Universe avail to silence the full-toned psalm of praise which rings from basement to roof:—"O Lord! how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee!"

LECTURE VI.

*ARCHITECTONIC UNITY.*



## LECTURE VI.

### ARCHITECTONIC UNITY.

#### § I.

THE hieroglyphics covering every leaf of Nature's Great Book are written in more dialects than one. Adaptation of means to ends, the universal characteristic of every natural process and product, inlaid throughout the fabric of life, stamped on every cell and atom, is far from being the only evidence which the universe discloses of all-pervading Purpose. In the great workshop of Nature, everything is both tool and work, means and end. In the endless web of life, in which there are no broken threads, and every thread takes by turn every dye, we have to consider not only the threads and the loom, but the pattern. How comes *that*? How can the monotonous working of blind mechanic law produce such ever-varying, yet harmonious complexities of meaning and beauty, as well as use?

The argument from Design, therefore, in the narrow sense in which the phrase is very commonly understood, exhibits but a single branch of the witness borne by nature to the existence of God. We have further to consider the proofs of all-controlling purpose, and therefore of an originating and governing Mind, in the Law, Harmony, Beauty, Significance, and subservience to Moral Ends, pervading the Universe.

Even that portion of the evidence, however, which we have already surveyed, is on the face of it, in a plain common-sense view, so irresistibly strong, that those who reject it can escape the charge of an unthinking disregard of evidence only in one of three ways : (1) by discrediting the validity of human knowledge at large ; (2) by arbitrarily narrowing the boundaries of human knowledge ; or (3) by advancing a rival hypothesis of the universe. The first method, that of metaphysical scepticism, or thorough-going agnosticism, is the most consistent ; but it is hopelessly at variance with the splendid discoveries of science, and the confidence they engender in the objective truth of knowledge. The second is the method of Comte and the Positivists. The third method has been attempted by various systems ; by the atomic mechanism of Lucretius, by the pantheism of Spinoza, and in our own day by what is known as the Doctrine of Evolution, of which, therefore, it is necessary now to speak.

The hypothesis of Evolution, it must be premised, may be accepted in two widely different senses. It may be regarded in that light in which we have partly examined it in the last Lecture ; viz., as an imaginary history of the process through which the universe has passed from the beginning to the present time ; or it may be offered as an adequate theory of the universe, superseding the belief in a Creator. In the first acceptance it is not inconsistent with Theism, or even with Christianity. In the second I shall hope to show that it is inconsistent with fact.

In my last Lecture I stated that Evolution can pretend to give account of only one of the three grand classes of adaptation pervading Nature—viz., that to which the



doctrine of natural selection applies. In this assertion I was not taking the measure of the faith of its adherents, or expressing their opinion of its capacity. I was simply referring to the fact that the doctrine of Natural Selection offers a clearly intelligible explanation, though, as I tried to show, an inadequate and unreal one, of that special class of facts to which it applies. As much cannot be said of the larger doctrine of Evolution, tried by any ordinary canon of criticism.

Evolution as a theory of the universe, claiming to displace and replace Theism, requires, and apparently inspires, as strong an exercise of faith as Christianity itself. As I observed in my last lecture, it is more frequently sought to be enforced by authority than to be justified by argument. Facts are first explained by its means, and then assumed as evidence of its truth. Such formulæ as these are the accepted style in reference to it: "All competent judges are now agreed" . . . "Every educated person is aware that those best qualified to judge, tell us" . . . "It can now no longer be questioned" . . . "Science teaches us" . . . These and such-like phrases greet us continually from the very persons who are loudest in denouncing authority as the test of truth. We are threatened with a new intellectual tyranny of the most odious kind: not a dictatorship of some imperial genius, but a decemvirate of specialists, an oligarchy of experts. The dogma of scientific infallibility is proclaimed without the decorum of an œcumenic council or the election of a sovereign pontiff. Adhesion to it is made the test of intellectual orthodoxy or heresy; the passport to the Upper Ten Thousand of intellectual society. Those who dissent are offered the choice of being set down as incapably ignorant, wilfully blind, or

consciously dishonest. For my own part, as a free-born citizen of the commonwealth of thought and of speech, I protest against this suppression of free thought in the name of progress; this erection of a new authority by those who are never weary of extolling intellectual liberty, and denouncing the authority of the greatest names and most venerable traditions of the past. Sensible men will always respect the judgment of a specialist or expert on his own peculiar ground. But these are questions far too broad and deep for any man to claim to be regarded as a specialist concerning them; and rigorous scientific training, far from conferring any special right to dogmatise here, may very possibly act as a disqualification. Few indeed are the minds — “*Rari nantes in gurgite vasto*” — whose development is at once powerful and equable. Besides the limited power and various native bent of human faculties, other causes combine to hinder this: the rapid increase in the multitude of details to be mastered in each branch of knowledge; and the power of habit which blunts by disuse as well as sharpens by use. Minds bred and broken-in to run in the traces of rigorous mathematical or experimental investigation are, for the most part, little fitted to hunt truth in the open, along the track of moral evidence or historic testimony. The scientific mind is a delicate instrument ground and polished to a fine point; but this diamond-pointed accuracy may be at the expense of elasticity of grasp. Truth is one; but all truths are not discoverable by the same faculties. You can no more see the stars through a microscope than you can see a diatom through a telescope; and any one who tries to do either may very likely come to think there is nothing to be seen. The scientist, if a capable

man, is entitled to speak with authority on matters within the focus of his own lens ; but the naked eye of keen common sense may prove incomparably our best guide in those misty border regions where Science touches History in one direction, Metaphysics in another, Morals in a third.<sup>1</sup>

EVOLUTION supplies no explanation of the universe. Rather, this doctrine is an attempt to show that no explanation is either possible or necessary. "Generalise the facts and they explain themselves, so far as there is any room for explanation : all beyond that is the unintelligible and the unknowable." If a generalisation can be framed so comprehensively as to take in all the facts of the Universe (as an algebraic expression may include all numbers), this, it is presumed, will be the top-stone of philosophy, the culminating triumph of reason. Generalisation is mistaken for analysis ; and this subtle confusion (one of the most characteristic marks of a certain school of thinkers) begets extensive results. In regard to the history of the universe, it means substituting the idea of PROCESS for that of CAUSE. This is neither a novelty nor a peculiarity. According to that school of thought of which Mr. J. Stuart Mill may be reckoned the ablest modern exponent, it constitutes the very philosophy of causation. But this philosophy has an undying foe in that to which it appeals as its supreme judge and oracle—Experience. Free - will is as much a part of experience as colour, taste, or sound. We are conscious causes. The view which derives our idea of cause exclusively from the conscious putting forth of power

<sup>1</sup> The proneness of scientific men to fall in love at sight with theories whose beauty is their only dowry, portionless as regards evidence, suggests grave reflections as to the educational value of scientific training. To observe wisely is one thing ; to think justly is another.

in every act of will, does not, I confess, satisfy me. It seems to me that we have a direct intuition of cause as implied in all outward phenomena, as well as a consciousness of personal causation. But whatever may be the genesis of the idea, it is a living indestructible idea, refusing to let itself be conjured out of existence by the spell of any philosophy, charming never so wisely. The Mind is the mother of all philosophies, and the mother remains wiser than her children.

Reason, beholding the sublime procession of worlds and living forms emerging from the dim eternal past, and wending towards the ever-brightening future, cannot refrain from asking, Whence did it begin, and what hand marshals it on its trackless way? It is no answer to say: "It never had a beginning; it marshals itself as it goes: and its progress is determined by an immanent processional necessity." Yet this is the answer offered by the evolutionist theory.

Suppose the evolutionist should say: "You do me injustice: I am not denying Cause in your sense, any more than affirming it; I simply set it aside as an idea with which I have nothing to do. I do not substitute process for cause. I merely seek to picture and to analyse the process, leaving others, if they please, to concern themselves with its cause." If so, we can have no quarrel with Evolution in this modest and reasonable guise. We have only to request that our friend would use his influence to get a large part of Evolutionist literature rewritten on this principle. Evolution as science is one thing, Evolution as philosophy, and as philosophy claiming to supersede and explode Theology, is another. The question which here concerns us is, whether the doctrine of Evolution, as expounded by its

ablest teachers, has cast any doubt on the proof furnished by the manifestation of all-pervading purpose in Nature, of the existence of a Supreme Mind. Has it proved that Design does *not* imply à Designer? Has it shaken any of the foundation-stones of Natural Theology?

To answer this question we must go back to the beginning, or at least as far back as we can. We may leave untouched the question of the origin of life. We need not stop to inquire whether "*integration of matter*" is a phrase scientifically applicable to that vortex of swiftly coming and going particles which connects each individual centre of life with the earth and its atmosphere; whether the mechanical principle of motion taking "*the line of least resistance*," has any application to the growth, in all conceivable directions, often against strong resistance, of organic bodies; or whether the "*instability of the homogeneous*" be a better established phenomenon than the instability of "*the heterogeneous*." We may accept as both probable and beautiful the account, both of the slow condensation of our solar system from a mass of incandescent vapour, and of those comparatively recent changes by which, during numberless millenniums, our own globe cooled and settled into its present form. Assuming all this, we cannot but ask, What was the first step in that immeasurable process?—eternal in comparison with our experience of time, but not actually eternal, inasmuch as we find ourselves arrived at a definite stage which sums up the entire past as recorded result, and contains the germs of the interminable future.

The supposition that the fiery vapour, or 'world dust,' out of which our system has been developed, was the wreck of former worlds or systems, reduced to vapour

by the heat evolved in the shock of a stellar collision, merely postpones the question ; using the impotence of imagination as a means of baffling, not satisfying reason. We simply come to the same point : Whence those pre-solar systems ? Whence the heated, shining vapour out of which they too were condensed ? Repeat the evasion as often as you will, the question still returns and claims a rational reply. The mock eternity of perpetual reiteration will not satisfy reason.

Of the possible hypotheses regarding the earliest stage of things, let us take first the simplest, namely, that of perfectly homogeneous matter in the state of highly rarefied gas equably diffused through all space. In this case nothing could ever have happened. A universe of hydrogen, for example, equably diffused, equably heated, having no exterior space into which its heat could radiate, no external force acting upon it, and no possible centre of attraction, must have remained simply a universe of hydrogen gas to eternity. The second possible hypothesis is that of a definite quantity of homogeneous matter existing in free space, possessing therefore some definite figure, regular or irregular. Whatever might be the results of this state of things (which for aught we know may exist in some of the *nebulæ*), it is perfectly manifest that it has never been the condition of our present universe. Straining our mental vision as far as we can into the immense past, what do we find ? Atoms, force, and the non-atomic, weightless medium of light and heat. Each of these terms—‘atoms,’ ‘force,’ ‘ethereal undulation’—is generic ; standing not for one sort of thing but many. We find threescore kinds of atom, possessing different weights and capacities for heat ; whose miraculous powers have only a latent existence

in the primeval state we are contemplating, to be developed only in combination, and whose varying proportions are as essential to the world that is to be as those yet unborn properties. We find the force of simple cohesion, which, when the raging despotism of heat shall have abated, will emerge from its imprisonment and bind liquids in pliant yet powerful bonds ; metals and rocks with adamantine fetters ; and will weave in the loom of life the tough heart of the oak, the hide of the rhinoceros, and the fragile down on the butterfly's wing. We find the force of chemical affinity, so powerful that one element defies every attempt to isolate it, so weak that some compounds explode at a touch. We find the unvarying force of gravity, whose name is the very type of law. These three types of force bear no assignable proportion to one another. Yet on their intricate balance and reaction, in league with such more recondite forces as electricity and nervous energy, and that simplest but not least mysterious form of force familiar to us in the motion and impact of bodies ; the whole activity of the universe is suspended. By transformations more marvellous than the magic of fairy legends, they destroy and reproduce one another. Gravity, acting as suspended weight, becomes an exact measure of the force of cohesion. Free to act in a falling body, it gives the measure of momentum ; which, when retarded by friction or suddenly arrested, is transformed into molecular motion, manifested to our senses as heat. Heat, again, by softening and melting solids, and by expanding and vapourising liquids, dissolves the tie of cohesion ; or in certain cases (as in baked clay) binds it faster. In some cases it produces, in other, it destroys, chemical combination. Chemical force, again,

is intimately connected with gravity ; as appears from the relation between the combining weights of different substances and their capacity for heat. All chemical changes are believed to depend on the electric state of the combining or separating atoms. And electricity stands in a very intimate though obscure relation to the mysterious nerve-force which is the silver chain on which the lamp of conscious voluntary life is hung.

It will in no way simplify the problem of evolution if we assume all matter to be identical,—what we know as elemental atoms being but various modifications of one type : and all forces to be likewise identical ; nor yet if we take one step further, and suppose atoms themselves to be but centres or vortices of force formed in the ethereal light-medium. For, first, this would not necessarily imply that the one supposed force has, or ever could have, any existence, except under the form of the several actual forces ; or the one generic matter, except under the form of specific atoms. And, secondly, supposing it were so, then this single arch-force, and this simple *plus-quam-elemental* matter, must have possessed in the beginning the capacity for developing into different forces and different elements. The elements and forces were there *in posse* if not *in esse*, and the miracle is all the greater, on this hypothesis of their all springing from one root, that the latent qualities and numerical proportions allotted to them at the outset, and thenceforth eternally immutable, should have been precisely what they are : *q.d.*, precisely what were needed for the building up of this fair universe, with its labyrinth of harmonious action and reaction, and its stupendous yet so delicately-balanced system of organised life and conscious happiness. Either way, atoms and forces as they



now exist are our starting point, because they are unchangeable in relation to the universe as it is.

Behold, then, our universe in embryo. As yet, cohesion is not ; chemical action is not ; electric and magnetic action have no place ; bodies solid or liquid do not exist ; nor yet chemical compounds even in gaseous form. Gravitation itself as between masses has not come into play—only gravitation of diffused atoms, each kind having a distinct specific weight. Light, heat, and atoms in a state of intense vibration and violent motion, incessantly impinging on one another with elastic recoil : this is the nascent universe. Yet, *in some sense or other*, suns, with their attendant planets—our own solar system among millions of others, probably no two of them alike—day and night, summer and winter, oceans, atmosphere, clouds, rivers, mountains, minerals, fertile soils, the infinitely varied forms of vegetable and animal life : ALL ARE THERE in germ, in that seething chaos of fiery vapour. The evolutionist must add (though I do not) that life, mind, science, art, philosophy, politics, religion, are all there too.

In what sense was our solar system, or (to come still nearer home) our own earth, with its freight of varied life, potentially present in that ignited mist ? Was it not there simply as the statue is in the block, the painting in the colours and canvas, the building in the quarry and the forest, and, in short, all work in the material out of which it is to be wrought, without which it could not be ? The evolutionist replies : “Not so. All things that have since been developed out of the elements then and there existing, have been evolved in strict succession of cause and effect. The result is neither voluntary nor casual, but necessary. The stage

it has now reached is the inevitable consequent of all preceding intermediate stages. It was potentially there, not as the statue is in the block, out of which any other statue might be carved, but as the plant is in the seed, or as the pattern is in the loom. Given the seed, together with the proper conditions of heat, moisture, light, and so forth, and the plant results. Given the mechanism, from the steam-engine to the threads, with a sufficient supply of heat as driving power, and the pattern must needs be woven—that, and no other. So that (as Mr. Huxley says) “a Sufficient Intelligence” might have foretold, from a thorough knowledge of things as they were in that pre-solar state, the present flora and fauna of our earth.”

A scientific colour is attempted to be given to this statement by referring the entire series of effects to ‘the working of unvarying law.’ But this cannot be allowed. Common though the expression be, even from the pen and lips of men of science, and convenient as a shorthand figure of speech, no phrase can be more unscientific than this of “the working of law.” Laws do not work: they exist. To say that a physical result is produced by the working of a physical law, is as incorrect as to say that an arithmetical result is produced by the working of an algebraic formula. It is the calculating mind that works, *according to* the formula. A law of Nature must be either, as Paley defines it, “the order according to which power acts” (including, if the power be an intelligent agent, “the mode according to which an agent proceeds”);<sup>1</sup> or else (as Mr. Mill

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Theology*, chap. viii. Paley, with characteristic acumen, pointed out the abuse of the term ‘law,’ which has grown since his day to stupendous proportions.

expresses it) "a uniformity" in the course of Nature ; of which the scientific expression is a generalisation or general statement, comprehending, like a mathematical formula, an infinite number of particular facts.<sup>1</sup> In each case, physical laws are not the *explanation* but the description of the facts which range under them. Laws explain nothing. They are themselves among the most prominent facts of Nature, demanding to be rationally accounted for. And to use the term 'law' as if it were equivalent to 'efficient cause' involves a confusion of thought of the first magnitude.

On further consideration our Evolutionist must decline the use of the two similitudes of the plant in the seed and the pattern in the loom, though they were the best I could supply him with. Plausible as they look, they would betray his cause. For the seed, though in some inscrutable manner it contains the starting-point of that series of changes from which at last the perfect plant with flower and fruit emerges, does not contain the matter out of which the plant is to be formed, or the solar, chemical, and other forces by which those changes are to be brought about. Besides which, it can but reproduce an idea or type which has been already realised in the parent plant and its progenitors ; or, in the case of a plant transformed by cultivation, develop qualities latent in them. And the pattern emerges from the loom with mechanical accuracy simply because it was first put into the loom by the maker : it existed in

<sup>1</sup> "What is called the uniformity of the course of Nature is itself a complex fact compounded of all the separate uniformities which exist in respect of single phenomena." "The expression 'Laws of Nature' means nothing but the uniformities which exist among natural phenomena (or, in other words, the results of induction) when reduced to their simplest expression."—J. STUART MILL, *System of Logic*, bk. iii. chap. iv.

the designer's mind, and is the very purpose for which the loom was made and arranged. Where were the first seeds of the universe ripened? Or where did the pattern exist of this fair world of life and beauty and joy when the loom was first set up and its threads put in motion? If in the full-grown plant we recognise admirable beauty and manifold use, these are neither explained, nor explained away, by showing us the seed from which it sprang and the process by which it grew. If in the woven pattern we discern the unmistakable presence of designing thought and artistic skill, these are in no way obscured, but heightened, by our learning how the steam power, the intricate mechanism of the loom, and the nature and arrangement of the threads, combine in turning out the foreseen results. Just in the same way, if Evolution supplies a true account, in such outline as our feeble thought can compass, of the rise and progress of our present world, this affords no explanation of the original facts. Let us, for clearness' sake, sum them up once more. In the very beginning there were a fixed number of different kinds of atoms, those of each kind rigidly alike, bound to behave in exactly the same way under the same circumstances; each atom endowed with latent properties, unlike those of every other kind, yet only *relatively existent* (*i.e.*, inert except in combination). The proportions of these elements varied, so that while some few sorts compose the bulk of matter known to us, of others, intense scrutiny has detected only rare traces. They were capable of responding in very different degrees to the great universal forces of Nature (gravitation, heat, electricity, and the rest). Lastly, all these diversities, including numerical disproportion, turn out after the lapse of millions

of ages to have been precisely the requisite conditions of the existence of plants, animals, and man, upon our globe. These primordial elements and forces were not the loom, but the forge and workshop in which the loom was made ; not the warp and woof, but the mill in which the yarn was spun, for the weaving in due time of this glorious web of life, joy, and beauty.

The sum of my contention thus far is this : PROCESS is not CAUSE. Evolution, supposing it to give a true history of the Process, sheds no ray of light on the Cause, even in the scientific sense of the word ' Cause ; ' *q.d.*, the existence of the earliest antecedent in the whole series,—the first set of circumstances which rendered possible all subsequent steps and stages. If the results as we now see them present evidence of power directed by wisdom, skill subserving purpose, and purpose, skill, wisdom, power, ministering to benevolence ; then the validity of this proof is in no wise weakened, but the wonder of it is enormously augmented if we have reason to believe that these results were already secured in that state of things to which our globe would revert if, dashing against some sister globe, it were molten and vapourised by the heat of its arrested motion, and every atom were to flee from the company of its fellow-atoms on wings of fire into immeasurable space.

## § II.

From this excursion into the dim arcana of the Past, keeping in view its lessons, let us return to the facts of the Present, and take a rapid survey of those features of the universe, more especially of our own globe, enumerated at the outset of the present lecture : namely, Law,

Harmony, Beauty, Significance, and subservience to Moral Purpose.

I. LAW.—The term ‘law’ has come into such prominence in modern thought, and is so constantly on the lips of both the learned and the unlearned, that it may seem presumptuous, if not irrational, to imagine that everybody does not understand it, and that even scientific writers not seldom use it rather to cover a lack of meaning than to express a true idea. Yet I am compelled to avow the conviction that this is so. Strictly, the idea of Law belongs not to the domain of Nature, but to the realm of Mind ; and in that realm, not to purely intellectual activity, but to the activity of will, desire, and social life. It signifies that which is *laid down*,<sup>1</sup> fixed, or appointed by sovereign authority. It contemplates the possibility of willing obedience to a command, or conformity to a rule, necessarily implying the possibility of disobedience. Its application to Nature is therefore figurative, since in the working of Nature there is neither disobedience nor nonconformity ; nor yet anything corresponding to voluntary obedience. The term is part of the coinage in which Mind has sought to repay a portion of its debts to external Nature. As originally used, this figure was full of meaning. It meant that the material as well as the moral world is subject to the will of a Sovereign Ruler and bound by His decree. This idea is expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures in such forms as these :—“ For ever, O Lord ! thy word is settled in heaven. They continue this day

<sup>1</sup> The Saxon (*lah, lag, lagu*), Latin (*lex*), Greek (*νόμος*—allotment, appointment), German (*Gesetz*), all express substantially the same idea. The Hebrew has numerous words of kindred meaning.

according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; . . . who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it.”<sup>1</sup>

Scientific writers, retaining the word ‘law,’ have sedulously emptied it of all figurative, moral, and religious meaning. Natural laws, in the modern sense of the term, are the exact opposite of moral laws. A moral law states what always OUGHT to be; but as matter of fact never IS, universally among mankind, or permanently and perfectly in any single human being. It is ideal, not real. A natural law states what IS everywhere and without exception. Its ideal value wholly depends on its accurately describing reality. A single exception would show that the law was not truly stated. It is the description of a ‘uniformity of Nature;’ *q. d.*, an observed uniformity; for uniformities which we have not observed have no existence for us, how essential soever they may be in the actual working of the universe. Whatever else, then, a Law of Nature may be, it is this: a statement describing an observed uniformity in the working of Nature; *i. e.*, in the mutual action and reaction of atoms and forces. It is a conception standing as a formula or short-hand description comprehending an infinite multitude of particular facts, and equally applicable to every one of them.

It is obvious therefore that a Law of Nature is capable

<sup>1</sup> As applied to purely intellectual processes the term ‘law’ has a mixed meaning, since there are natural laws of reasoning which the mind cannot break (such as ‘the principle of contradiction’), and other laws which are broken whenever we reason ill, but which *ought* to be observed.

of existing only intellectually—in the human or some other intelligence. ‘Uniformity,’ ‘similarity,’ ‘identity,’ ‘observed order,’ ‘sequence,’ ‘coexistence,’ are simply ideas or conceptions, which can exist nowhere but in a thinking subject. They are forms with which our thought invests the phenomena of Nature. In actual Nature everything is individual. Each atom is itself, and nothing else. Each event occurs from its own cause, which being what it was, the event could not but occur. If the properties of an atom, or the character of an event, be such that we can comprehend it in one description with a multitude of other atoms or events, which to our minds are precisely similar, this similarity or sameness is not in the atom itself, or in the event itself, but in many atoms or many events as contemplated by our minds. This mental impression or judgment we register by giving to the many atoms one name and comprehending the many events under one law. The question then arises,—How comes it that the actual working of Nature answers to our intellectual formulæ; particular substances to general names, and particular events—that is, the action of any force at any point of space and time—to general laws? Since the universal is the intellectual, how comes it to characterise the material? How is it that Nature is ruled by ideas? In what mind do these eternal thoughts abide, whose universal sway over the working of Nature the mind of man glories in slowly and painfully discovering?

The only answer to this question possible to one who denies the evidence of a creating Mind, must, I conceive, be to this effect. “Since Nature works, it must work either uniformly or irregularly. Since atoms exist, they must be such as to appear to our minds either like



or unlike, variable or invariable. But irregularity, unlikeness, and variableness would just as much need accounting for as uniformity, likeness, and unchangeable identity, and indeed more so. Some primitive facts we must accept without trying to get at the back of them, just as the believer in God accepts the Divine existence as an ultimate fact without any desire to account for it. So we accept atoms and force. And since as a matter of fact atoms are such that they sort themselves into sets which we discern to be precisely similar, and forces are such that it is indifferent to them at what point of time or space they act, it necessarily follows that what is true of one atom will be true of all which happen to possess the same qualities, and what is true of any force here and now will be true always and everywhere. Universal ideas and laws therefore have no existence in Nature, but are merely our way of describing what we find in Nature. Nature works uniformly because there is nothing to make it work otherwise. Thus, *e.g.*, in the case of what we call the law of gravitation, there are in Nature no such things as squares of distances, or inverse proportions, or ratios of any kind; these are only our way of representing the action of an invariable force acting at all distances.<sup>1</sup> Or again, in the case of chemical combination, if an atom combine at all with other atoms it must combine with some number of them; if it does this once it will do it always under the same circumstances; and this we shall express by a numerical law of definite proportion. So with all mathematical and arithmetical laws: they are the result, not the reason, of Nature's uniformity."

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the attraction exerted by any mass of matter is equal at all distances, if instead of considering the force as exerted along a single line (as in the ordinary statement of the law) you consider the total force represented by the surface of a sphere of which that line is the radius.

This answer is true as far as it goes. The truth it contains is of great importance as a caution against confounding the objective with the subjective, — the reality of Nature with the view taken of it by our own minds. The prospect which a traveller beholds from a hill-top may enable him to count the fields, to estimate the proportions of woodland, pasture, and arable, and to find his way from village to village. But the landscape is in the traveller's eye alone ; as a landscape, it exists only for an eye placed at that exact point of view. Nothing corresponding to it has existed in the minds of the men who own or till the fields, or who made the roads and built the villages ; or in that of the maker of the field-glass through which the traveller surveys the harmonious prospect. His eye creates the beauty it beholds.

When we have conceded all this, however, we shall still find that this answer, true as far as it goes, goes but a little way. It leaves the real heart of the question untouched. It accounts indeed for the possible existence of some laws of Nature, but it takes no note of the character of those laws, which is, after all, the truly noteworthy thing about them. Their character is this : that if we suppose all Nature to be the work of an infinitely wise, good, and powerful Mind, the actual laws of Nature are precisely what on that supposition they ought to be. The uniformities they represent are not random, useless uniformities, out of which some useful result crops up here and there. None of them are incongruous, none superfluous. They work together for good. Rigid as they are, when their unswerving action would clash with the general scheme, it is bent sometimes into the most surprising shapes. The ex-

ample of water has been often referred to on account of its apparent anomaly, manifest utility, and singular beauty of contrivance. The universal law of heat is, that bodies expand as they grow hotter and shrink as they cool. If water, which follows this law down to a certain point, followed it consistently, the coldest water would be the heaviest, ice would be heavier than water, and rivers and lakes would freeze from the bottom upwards into a solid mass, which the Spring sun would vainly seek to thaw, and in which all life would perish. It is true that water is by no means the only substance which expands in solidifying ; and to this fact we owe, among other things, the perfection of the art of iron-founding. But water does not merely expand as it becomes solid, it ceases to contract and begins to expand at eight degrees (Fahr.) above freezing-point ; and thus the coldest water floats at the top, and as it is chilled by the bitter wintry air, the ice which floats and slowly thickens forms a defensive crust for the unfrozen depths where life finds a refuge.

Laws of Nature would be of little or no value as abstract isolated formulæ. Their value is in their pointing downwards, inwards, or upwards. Downwards, to the immense multitude of particular facts which we can understand, predict, and control, by knowing the law which embraces them ; inwards, to some permanent underlying force or reality ; or upwards, to the all-comprehending and all-controlling MIND, in which alone they can be intelligibly conceived to have their origin. No single law, how comprehensive soever, would afford any strong evidence that such a Mind exists. The witness of physical laws, like the witness of every part of Nature, is cumulative, and becomes overwhelmingly

strong when we consider the next grand characteristic feature of the Universe.

II. HARMONY. The universal prevalence of fixed laws throughout Nature involves two consequences. First,—That each particular substance, atom, or event, falls under a great number of distinct laws, the relations of which are intricate beyond human conception. Suppose all the elements of the universe given, with their latent or possible properties, the most powerful human intellect could form no conjecture by what laws they must be regulated in order for the simplest event, such as the freezing of a drop of water, to take place; nor what would be the result of a slight change in any one of them; as, for example, what would be the effect on the atmosphere, the ocean, and the climates of our earth if the freezing-point of water were fixed a degree or two higher or lower than it is.

Secondly,—That every event involves a multitude of results equally defying computation. To describe this universal interworking of events and laws as a web or network would suggest a false idea of simplicity. At every point, in every series of occurrences, innumerable lines of causation meet, like rays in a focus, every cause being itself an effect of many causes, partly past, partly coexistent. And from each point diverge countless lines of result which become part-causes or conditions *sine quâ non* of other events. Thus, *e.g.*, the application of a gentle heat for a fixed number of days to a bird's egg is one indispensable cause of every action in the life of the bird hatched from it; and the momentary act of the bird in dropping a seed into soil which chances to be favourable to its growth is one indis-

pensable link connecting all the agencies, stretching back through unknown ages and reaching as far as the sun, which have gone to the production and ripening of that seed, with the fresh series of events,—perhaps to endure for many centuries—resulting from its growth.

The conclusion seems irresistible, that the existence of special purposes, carried out with the constancy of law, in every organ and function of animal and vegetable life, together with a complex adaptation of climate, soil, seasons, and all other circumstances, to the maintenance of life, would be incompatible with the existence of universal laws, unless the total action and reaction of all those laws had in some way been taken account of in the establishment of each separate law, and in the formation in definite proportions of each distinct species of matter. And since (as we have seen) general laws and relations of every kind have only an intellectual existence, this is tantamount to a demonstration of the existence of a Mind in which those laws in all their mutual relations are eternally comprehended. This conclusion is enormously strengthened when we take into consideration the operation of CHANCE in the general working of Nature. The dropping of the seed by the bird is an example of this. A good deal of unsound philosophy is talked concerning Chance. It is considered both a Christian and a scientific way of speaking to deny that there is any such thing as chance. Whereas in fact the term 'chance' is as scriptural as the idea for which it stands is definite and intelligible. Chance is the cross-working of independent causes, the intersection of unconnected lines of causation. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness." The

flight of the arrow was for the moment the last result of a chain of causes reaching back to the time when the arrow and the bow were made, and when the boy learned his first lesson in archery. The position of King Ahab in his chariot at that moment was in like manner the result of a complicated train of causes, great and small. The chance lay in this—that these two trains of causation, perfectly independent of each other, brought the weak part of Ahab's armour across the path of the arrow with an accuracy which the most deliberate aim might have failed to secure. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, . . . and by chance there came down a certain priest that way." The two distinct chains of cause and effect comprised in the lives of the two men are seen crossing, probably for the only time, just there and then. A steam-packet and a sailing-vessel meet in mid-ocean. Perhaps of the infinitely complicated trains of causation which have gone to place the two ships at that spot at the given moment, the darkness or the fog which prevents each from seeing the other till they are within cable's length, may be the sole cause common to both. At the last minute the result may turn on the judgment and presence of mind of the officer in command of the steamer, determining the order '*Port*' or '*Starboard*.' If he utters the one, the ships may glide past one another with the loss of a few spars; if the other, they crash together, and the sailing-vessel sinks. In the second of the foregoing examples the probability or improbability of the occurrence would depend upon whether the two men were in the habit of frequently journeying along that road. In the first and third examples the event was enormously improbable: the chances, as we say, were incalculably

against it. But this formed no reason why it should not happen. The unlikelihood of any event is a reason for our not expecting it, or not easily believing it to have happened, but no reason for its not happening.

Great confusion of thought arises from the manner in which 'the doctrine of chances,' and even 'the law of chance,' is spoken of. A chance is essentially an occurrence which has no law. It is the cross-action, not the harmony, of laws. When a large number of chances are in question, they may so balance one another that we may be able to formulate the wholesale result and compute the average; and we may, if we please, call this general statement *a law*. But the term is inaccurate; for a scientific law describes what takes place in every particular instance, whereas an average describes that which does not occur in any particular instance. The certainty of the sum of the chances on the large scale does not affect the uncertainty of each particular chance.<sup>1</sup>

Chance enters into human affairs as a disturbing influence, hostile to plan, forecast, and order. Now and then a lucky stroke of good fortune effects what the best foresight could not have secured. But in the main, we have to take account of chance in the shape of mischance, misfortune, or ill luck, as a thing to be guarded against, not counted on. The principal reason of this is the limited range of human foresight. But even where events can be foreseen they cannot always be made to fit our plans. The faculty of combination, whereby—in

<sup>1</sup> If, for example, but one arrow out of a hundred hits the mark, the chances were exactly the same against the one which hit as against the ninety-nine which missed. Or if out of a hundred numbers to be drawn from a bag, three are prizes and the rest blanks, the chances, perfectly even at the outset, vary with each successive drawing. But what is absolutely certain is, that no one number can obtain the  $\frac{3}{100}$  of a prize, which is the average value of its chance.

politics, war, mechanical operations, or any great department of human action—many independent lines of causation are enlisted in favour of one result, or many purposes secured through one set of means, is justly accounted the highest form of genius.

Observe what follows from all this. It follows, first, that to assign Chance as the parent of the law and order of the Universe, is to use words without meaning. It is like ascribing the invention and making of a fishing-net to the fishes which are caught in it. It follows, secondly, that if in the operations of Nature, Chance does not intrude, as in the works of man, as a disturbing and even ruinous influence, it must be either because it has been foreseen, or because it is controlled, or for both these reasons. For the operations of Nature—its development and so-called evolution—are not along parallel and independent lines of causation, nor yet along diverging lines springing from a single stem. They move along lines starting from separate origins, but so intricate in their intersections that neither arithmetic nor geometry can represent their complexity. And it is upon this cross-action of independent causes—the same thing which in its particular occurrences, defying human foresight and control, we name Chance,—that the framework of organic life, and even the life, well-being, and progressive history of mankind, are suspended.

In this vast discussion illustrations are as dangerous as they are useful. Useful, perhaps indispensable, to lighten the strain of abstract reasoning, and remind us that we are dealing with the world of solid realities, they are dangerous, because we are tempted to feel as though we had in them, not minute samples, but something like the entire body of evidence; or, as Mr. Mill



says of his half-page summary of the Universe, "the argument in its full strength." Whereas, though the principle of the argument may lie in a dewdrop, its compass can be comprehended only by a mind for which the Universe has no secrets.

The first shower that falls on our garden, or the first breeze that blows upon us from the bitter east or balmy west, may suggest illustrations that would fill a volume. The universal law of gravitation, the specific weights of oxygen, nitrogen, and water, the molecular action of heat, including evaporation, the quantity of heat received by our globe from the sun, the elasticity of gases, the rotation of the earth, its mass, the inclination of its axis, the proportion of water it contains; are so many positive fundamental facts, each of which as a permanent cause produces its own effects, unembarrassed by the action of the rest. Yet it is only the combined action of all these — *q.d.*, the composite result of their separate action — which produces that system of wind and rain on which so largely depends the fitness of our globe for man's agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and healthful and pleasant habitation. Let any one of these elements be greatly changed, and all the rest would be thrown out of gear. Again, in the causes which produce and transport rain-clouds, together with modifications of the earth's surface from totally independent causes, producing mountain ranges which attract the rain, strata through which it filters, and channels by which it flows down to the sea, we perceive the origin of rivers, with their enormous influence on the welfare and history of man, as well as on all those forms of life which inhabit them, and which without rivers could never have been called into existence.

A narrower but strikingly suggestive instance is the production of fertile soil through the slow grinding down of granite by the tooth of the weather. A wider illustration (referred to in a former Lecture) is found in the history of the coal formation, and its influence on the material comfort, mental progress, and social condition of the leading nations of mankind. The intercourse both in peace and in war, the wealth, the mechanical industry of modern civilised nations, have sprung out of the coal forests. A still vaster illustration of the architectonic unity which interweaves the most remote natural causes, and builds all nature into one co-operative plan, is seen in the interdependence of the animal and vegetable kingdoms through the functions of nutrition and respiration. Animals are nourished either directly or indirectly upon vegetable substances, and depend every moment for life on the free oxygen, which they would have used up countless ages ago did it not stream forth incessantly, fresh and pure as at first, from hundreds of millions of square miles of vegetable surface. Plants, while they purify the air from the poison of the breath of animals, and the earth from the poison of their decaying bodies, transmute with miraculous chemistry the inorganic elements of the atmosphere and the soil into that prime matter of life known as 'protoplasm' or 'bioplasm,' which some recent writers seem disposed to exalt into a new deity under the name of 'Bathybius.' And—let me repeat it—all these elaborate harmonies depend absolutely on the structure and numerical proportions of atoms, compared with which our globe is a recent creation, and on those laws of light, heat, weight, and other universal forces, which, in comparison with all our conceptions of time, are eternal.

PURPOSE, then, pervades the universe in two distinct but accordant forms; particular Adaptation in every part, and all-embracing Plan,—Harmony ruled by Law. Either is incomprehensible apart from Mind. What shall we say of both together? This is a question which the advocates of Evolution without Deity have never fairly faced. In the jubilant applause which welcomed a theory that promised to explain how there might be design without a Designing Mind; how the snout of a weevil might by natural selection be developed into the proboscis of a bee, the eye of a crab into the eye of a fish, and, again, an eye fitted for vision in water into one fitted for vision in air;—it has been overlooked that the main question is not concerning crabs' eyes and beetles' snouts; it is, how there comes to be any fitness at all. How comes it (*e.g.*) that there is any fitness in ethereal undulations, so many millions of millions of throbs per second, to beget in vibrating molecules compounded of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon, with a little phosphorus, a consciousness of light, varying in accurate adaptation to the creature's habits and wants, from the vague diffused sensitiveness of the medusa floating in the waves, to the piercing vision of the vulture soaring ten thousand feet above the earth? Is there any answer, or only the vainest semblance of an answer, to such questions in the assertion that "the finality we perceive in Nature is not transcendent but immanent"? *Where* is it immanent? Wild wheat, for example, has never been discovered; but there can be no doubt that in its primitive uncultured state it was unfit for human food. Yet in the useless little plant—ripening and shedding its annual grains, who can say how many ages before man began to till the ground—lay hid a capa-

city for secreting and storing starch and gluten, which was in due time to make it the staff of life. *Where* was the *immanent fitness* of a quality which the plant did not possess, to nourish a being who had not yet come into existence? Where, but in a Mind which not merely foresaw the end from the beginning, but fashioned the beginning with a view to the end?

III. BEAUTY is the next character of Nature to which I call attention. Brief notice of this point may suffice, because the appeal made by this branch of evidence to our noblest faculties is so direct and impressive that it requires but little illustration or enforcement. The sense of beauty is one of man's highest endowments. The production of beauty—whether of form, as in sculpture and architecture, or of form and colour, as in painting, or of succession and concert of sounds, as in music, or of language and thought, as in poetry—has always been accounted the highest task of human genius. The perception and study of beauty are essential to the noblest culture. But man's lesson-book of beauty is Nature, the marvellous beauty of some of whose commonest works leaves his most laboured art immeasurably behind. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field. Natural beauty is in some cases the seemingly inevitable result of the constitution of natural objects and the working of wide general laws. Such, for example, is the beauty of the rainbow, of sunrise and sunset, of snow, of waves and waterfalls, of mountain passes and of distant mountain peaks and ranges. In some cases latent beauty (like the food-producing power in wild wheat) awaits the artificial touch of man for its development, as in the grain of polished woods and

marbles and the lovely hues and brilliancy of precious stones. But in a vast multitude of cases, as in the forms and colours of living creatures, beauty flows from no necessity of construction, for its absence in some closely allied forms is as marked as its presence in others. It is manifestly added for decoration and delight.

Painstaking and ingenious naturalists, who have earned the thanks of natural theologians as much as of men of science, have shown that shapes and colours which we call beautiful in plants and animals are by no means designed for the exclusive gratification of human beings. Birds of brilliant plumage find admiring eyes among their feathered mates in forests untrodden of man ; splendid fish flash not without a purpose through seas furrowed by no keel ; the flower born to blush unseen of man blooms not in vain for its insect guests and courtiers. Whereupon it is inferred, strangely enough, that if the beautiful in Nature serves other purposes besides delighting the eye and heart of man, this cannot be its purpose at all ; and sarcastic homilies are read on the conceit and littleness of man, who likes to fancy that all creation is only for his sake. Whereas the manifoldness of purpose in Nature is one of its most wonderful and pervading characters. Man, with his limited powers, is compelled to use up a distinct set of means for each special end ; but in Nature it does not constitute even a presumption that one end is not designed because other ends are attained by the same mechanism. A yet more serious oversight is the failure to perceive that there is no real analogy between the sense of beauty—if so we may call it—which renders the colour of a particular flower attractive to a certain moth, or the markings on a bird's plumage pleasing to the other sex of his own

species, and man's sense of beauty. What pleasure does the nightingale take in the song of the lark? As little as the frog takes in either, to whom the croak of her mate is music. The insect for whose delight the scarlet poppy blazes can see nothing to admire in the queenly purity of the lily, or in

“The little speedwell's darling blue,  
Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,  
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire ;”—

still less in the contrast and harmony of “bells and flowerets of a thousand hues,” whose “quaint enamelled eyes” meet the eye of man with a responsive smile of beauty.

For man's eye alone, of earthly creatures, is that which no other eye can take in,—the universal beauty of Nature. The azure vault ; the snowy islands of cloud in the June heaven, and gleaming cloud-mountain masses of the September sky ; the glories of sunset ; the woodlands in their delicate spring raiment or gorgeous autumn robes ; the purple moors ; bowery glades and rocky glens, where torrents pour down their mingled snow and silver ; tropical forests ; mountain-ranges, with their pastured slopes, rugged peaks and precipices, awful solitudes of snow and ice, rosy with dawn, crimson with sunset, or golden green and silver grey in the dazzling shimmer of noon ; the expanse of rich plains, through which wind majestic rivers, whose surface sunshine, shower, moonlight, change of season, deck with versatile charms ; the sea, with its ever-shifting moods of peaceful grandeur and awful might ; the lavish ornament and infinitely-varied grace of blossom and leaf, bird, beast, and insect, mossy rock and flashing gem ;—all these revelations of beauty, not strewn at random

here and there without concert, but each enhanced by its native setting, all by harmonious blending or vivid contrast heightening one another's effect and swelling the general sum of beauty;—all these exist for man alone. Transient to his eye, they are eternal in his memory. Imagination garners the scattered harvest of perishing Beauty. Genius gives it immortality. Silently it sinks into our heart, glorifies our thoughts; entwines itself with our affections; inspires and nurtures one of the purest and most elevating of passions,—the love of Nature; and clothes with tender dignity and mysterious power the precious memories of earlier days and of national history.

Is there no message in all this for man's reason, as well as for his taste and his emotions? Is beauty a revelation simply of man's capacity to create it by beholding it? Or does not every man who can bring to Nature a painter's eye or a poet's heart, divine in all that glorious vision the thought and handiwork of an infinitely greater Artist and Poet? Natural Beauty bears all the tokens of the most elaborate design; and the designed production of beauty so transcendent, ranging through every phase of loveliness from the exquisite refinement of the most delicate ornament to that sublimity in which beauty passes into awe, surely bespeaks a Mind of inconceivable wealth and grandeur.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE. Music reveals a world of beauty of its own,—a world of which the vast extent and true glory were hidden until comparatively recent times. But it may also be regarded as constituting a language, furnishing an expression which words cannot yield, of the whole range and intensity of human emotion. In

this view it supplies a link naturally connecting the foregoing branch of evidence with that next set down for our consideration; namely, the Significance, or Meaning, which pervades Nature. From the earliest times, the intimate relation of rhythm and melody with emotion has been intuitively recognised. But it was reserved for the great musicians of the last and present centuries (aided by the immense improvements in musical instruments) to explore the heights and depths of harmony, and to unlock a wealth of expression as well as a treasure of delight 'kept secret from the foundation of the world,' which appeals in marvellously blended proportion to sensation, emotion, and intellect. Indeed, of all the pre-ordained latent concords between material nature and the soul of man, Music seems the most wonderful. Musical sound is produced by rhythmical vibrations within certain limits of rapidity, as distinguished from irregular or too slow or rapid, which (if heard at all) produce on the ear the effect of *noise*, or sound void of music. When, therefore, air, metals, and other bodies received the capacity for transmitting equal vibrations, the material conditions were already provided for all the marvellous effects which entrance us in some masterpiece of Handel or Mozart. Yet these vibrations would never produce one musical note, were not the drum and nerves of the ear, and the sensitive consciousness, endowed with that *second sense of hearing* by which we distinguish melody and harmony from mere noise. The sense both of tune and of rhythm varies amazingly in different individuals, and is absolutely wanting in some persons whose hearing is otherwise perfect. It is a distinct sense, or rather two distinct senses. Here, at least, the theory of Natural



Selection finds no foothold. It is not any 'struggle for life' which develops a Jubal or an Asaph, a Handel or a Mendelssohn.<sup>1</sup>

It would be insanity to ascribe the successions and concords of sweet sounds which delight us when the 'Creation,' or the 'Hymn of Praise,' is rendered by a full orchestra, to a fortuitous concourse of vibrations. Is it less, or more, absurd to ascribe to the blind working of natural forces those complicated adaptations of vibratory motion, mathematical proportion (as in the length of strings, pipes, &c.), nervous organisation, and inward sense of hearing ; and, still further, the fitness of musical sounds in their succession, their harmony, and even their discord, to furnish a language, alike powerful and delicate, for the whole range of human passion ?

The language of emotion, however, is but one of the forms of language with which Nature stands ready to equip man. It is a form for whose development he could afford to wait until the last two centuries. Not so with that language which is at once the mirror and

<sup>1</sup> This statement is not affected by the fact that among the lower animals, and even in inanimate nature, some traces of music may be detected. Water flowing over stones sometimes gives out sounds like distant bells. The vibration of a gnat's wing is musical. The cuckoo's song gives an accurate interval of a third—commonly minor, but sometimes major—and sometimes, I believe, a fourth. I have heard a wild blackbird sing a key-note, third, fifth, and octave, with near approach to musical truth. Birds may be taught tunes. That cats have an ear for music, and in some cases a horror of discords, is beyond dispute. I have seen and heard a dog endeavouring, with evident pleasure not unmixed with vanity, to accompany the piano. I am not aware that any animal has shown a sense of musical time as well as tune. But these fragmentary hints of the grand secrets of melody and harmony yield no shadow of confirmation to the hypothesis of development through natural selection. A bullfinch would have no better chance of winning a mate if he sang, "Ye banks and braes," instead of 'his native wood-notes wild ;' and a cuckoo which sang seconds, fifths, and octaves, would probably be pecked to death.

the nurse of his intellect; deprived of which, nothing worthy of the name of reason would be possible to him: the language of words. The relation of spoken language to the sights, sounds, feelings, awakened in man by the visible universe, is a topic of immense range and interest. I can touch it here only just so far as to indicate its bearing on our great argument; though it is a track of inquiry well worth pursuing for its own sake. Whatever theory we adopt of the origin of language—imitative, instinctive, or inspired—language, as we are familiar with it in modern (*q. d.*, *old*) dialects, is a selection of arbitrary sounds. A single sound may stand even in the same language for widely different ideas (as no, know; not, knot), and different sounds for the same idea (as minute, tiny, very small). But when we study the natural history of language in the most ancient (*i. e.*, *youngest*) tongues accessible to us, we find that it is deeply and widely rooted in external nature. All words which stand for abstract or spiritual ideas, and for states, acts, and products of our inward consciousness, are drawn from words originally standing for objects of sense. Take, for example, the metaphors implied in the words, 'rectitude,' 'uprightness,' 'a crooked line of conduct,' 'humility,' 'precipitancy,' 'intellect,' 'reflection,' 'deliberation,' 'calculation,' 'conclusion.' This expedient, far from proving clumsy or inadequate, is found so apt, that the only way of expressing in an old and well-worn tongue (like our own) abstract moral or spiritual ideas with the force and vividness required by poetry and rhetoric, is by coining new metaphors in the same mint.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Every language contains two distinct departments: the physical department—that which provides names for things; and the intellectual department—that which provides names for thought and spirit. In the

Nor is the mint exhausted. Not only can every such idea find some expressive symbol in the material world, but the sights, sounds, and changes of Nature, and even its interior processes and most recondite secrets, as science brings them one by one to light, are full of beautiful and instructive analogies with human thought and human life. Thus the physical Universe has an intellectual value entirely apart from science on the one hand and beauty on the other. It is replete with hidden meanings, plain to the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart. Be it observed, that this symbolism of Nature yields images not of man's thoughts only, but of his emotions and of his active life. If light and darkness, or vision and blindness, are natural images of knowledge and ignorance, and the outward actions of weighing, counting, turning backwards, binding, interweaving, cutting, piercing, and a thousand others, supply natural pictures of the operations of our reason; no less naturally does sunshine symbolise joy, tempest passion, clouds and rain despondency and grief, warmth affection, coldness indifference, stainless transparency moral purity, attraction love, repulsion hatred. The course of a river from its source to the ocean, the progress of a traveller by hill and dale, through sun and shade; the budding, blooming, and withering of a flower; the daily journey of the sun; the succession of the seasons; afford pictures of human life so natural that we weave them into language, almost without being conscious that we are using metaphors. Seas, mountains, snowy peaks, flowery valleys, tangled

former, the names are simple representatives of things, which even the animals may learn. In the latter, the names of things are used as representatives of thought, and cannot therefore be learned, save by beings of intelligence."—Dr. BUSHNELL, in the *Preliminary Dissertation on Language* prefixed to "*God in Christ*,"—full of subtil and fruitful thought.

thickets, dull levels, barren wastes, stars that shine when all else is dark—all are rich with imagery which poets do not invent at their own caprice, but find their account in using because it is the native tongue of the heart.

We know the reply, prompt and complacent, of the empirical philosopher to considerations of this order. "Nature sympathises with man, not because she and he have a common Author, but because man is part and parcel of Nature. The language of thought and of moral emotion is borrowed from the language of sensation simply because intellectual and moral judgment and feeling are nothing but transformed sensations,—organised experience." To me, this reply seems devoid not only of truth but of meaning. Is there in fact any meaning in the assertion, that when I say "Lying is wrong," my idea of deceit and of its moral evil and guilt, and the emotion with which I despise and condemn it, are *transformed sensations*? This is not the place to debate this question. But even granting this psychological hypothesis, we should still have to account for the fact that Nature sympathises with man in these inscrutable transformations, and is found pliant to all the demands of his intellectual and moral nature. Nature is neither man's tyrant nor his slave; she is his friend, and speaks to him not only of an Intelligence of which his own is the feeble miniature, but of a Love for which his heart thirsts, and in which alone it can find rest. False, as dark and narrow, is the view which can see nothing in Nature but ice-cold mechanism and remorseless law. Nature has smiles and tears, warnings and promises, pathos and terror, grandeur and serenity, as well as order and mechanism. Beneath her mystic garment of change beats the throb of a Divine sympathy with man; and

of compassion and love not for man alone. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

V. MORAL PURPOSE. The words just quoted touch the very heart of our argument—its most vital, and what some account its weakest, part. The ancient Hebrew Poet looked forth on creation, and in the simplicity and joyousness of his faith sang, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Nature is the same now as then, but men look on it with changed eyes. The ablest English representative of modern empirical philosophy—a man in whom a mind naturally framed for faith and religion seems by sheer force of education to have been curdled and frozen into scepticism—left behind him an indictment against Nature, drawn with a certain ferocious bitterness which reminds one of the proverbial acerbity of lovers' quarrels. In a few pungent sentences, with the merciless clearness of which he was master, he paints the horrors which result from the unrelenting uniformity of physical law; the destruction and suffering, for example, caused by earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, inundations, and conflagrations. "The course of natural phenomena," he says, "being replete with everything which when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence, any one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things, would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men."<sup>1</sup> The obvious conclusion is, that Nature cannot be the work of a Creator at once omnipotent and benevolent.

This argument is capable of being employed against

<sup>1</sup> JOHN STUART MILL : *Essays*, p. 65.

Theism with great rhetorical effect ; but its logic will not stand a moment's scrutiny. Mr. Stuart Mill was a lover of truth, and an accurate (though narrow) thinker. Yet nothing can be more unfair than this line of argument. In the first place, to speak of Nature in the aggregate, or of any physical law or cause, as ruthless, remorseless, merciless, and the like, is absurd. For 'pitiless' implies capacity for pity ; 'merciless,' power and duty to exercise mercy ; and these attributes can exist only in a Personal Being, while their exercise implies the exact opposite of physical law,—the dealing with each case individually on moral considerations. So with justice. The course of Nature is inexorably just, in the only sense in which the term can have any meaning. It is impartial. Cause and effect (or antecedent and consequent) are constant. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That a man tells truth, or is generous and loving, is no reason why he should sail safely in a rotten ship over a stormy sea, or reap heavy crops in a bad season or on barren soil.

In the second place, this argument leaves out of view, by an almost inconceivable oversight, the main fact of the case : namely, that the general result and constant aim of those natural causes and laws from which the particular cases of suffering complained of arise, is benevolent, and benevolent only. Nature contains no malevolent contrivances, no maleficent laws. It is not true—it is the reverse of truth—that we blame men as wicked when their acts and works produce suffering in the same manner as suffering is produced by storms and earthquakes. We blame men only when harm is done of set purpose, or through culpable negligence ; and there is no harmful purpose or negligence in Nature. A man is

crushed by getting in the way of a train, or drowned by falling into a well, as surely as if buried beneath a falling cliff or overtaken by the rising tide. But the rock did not receive its solidity and weight, nor was the tide yoked to the moon, any more than the locomotive was built, or the well sunk, with a murderous purpose.

The question of MORAL evil, and of the suffering thence arising, stands wholly apart from the general course of outward nature, in which man takes his chance with other creatures. Mischief and suffering in this case spring not from the working of law, but from the breach of law. Man alone of all earthly creatures does wrong. Wilfully or ignorantly he disobeys the laws of his nature, or fails of complete fulfilment even when desiring it. The lower creatures often suffer for man's wrongdoing, never for their own. Theft is no crime in a monkey. Bloodthirstiness is not a vice in a tiger, nor vanity in a peacock. A dishonest, cruel, or vain man breaks the laws of his own nature;—the laws of human well-being as well as of human well-doing; and if it is good that those laws be observed, it is good that penalty should attend their infraction. The benevolent purpose of suffering as a means of moral discipline here comes into view. But the field of argument thus opened is wholly apart from the question we are here discussing, namely, the course of Nature as governed by universal laws which neither man nor any other creature can break.

The moral enormities with which Mr. Mill assures us the universe is replete, resolve themselves into this undeniable fact,—that in the portion of the universe with which we are familiar in our own world, suffering has its appointed place in the scheme of Nature. But

what place? A place inconsistent or consistent with perfect and far-reaching benevolence? In the human body, Pain is the sentinel that gives the alarm when a foe is in the camp. Analogy would lead us to believe that where it could answer no useful purpose, it exists, if at all, only in a rudimentary degree, like those abortive organs sometimes appealed to as contradicting the idea of design, but which in fact only prove that the growth of the animal frame proceeds on a fixed plan. Among human beings the sense of pain exists in different individuals in marvellously different degrees; and how unsafely we argue from man's nervous apparatus to that of the lower animals appears from the fact that while the sense of smell in a dog is incomparably more acute than in man, loathsome odours, which inflict absolute torture on a sensitive nostril, occasion a dog no inconvenience. Fear, a no less terrible form of suffering than pain, probably disappears when it can no longer be of use in stimulating the effort to escape. Persons who have been rescued after being seized by lions, testify that from the moment they lay helpless in the beast's grip, the sense of pain and almost of fear was paralysed. So it would seem to be with a bird fascinated by a snake, or a rabbit pursued by a weasel. The perfection of the organs of destruction possessed by carnivorous animals tends to diminish not to aggravate suffering. Were the tiger's fangs and claws, or the eagle's beak and talons, weak and blunt, instead of sharp and strong, the sufferings of the prey would be uselessly prolonged and intensified. The manifest purpose of these destructive weapons is not to inflict suffering on the victim, but to supply the captor with food, accompanied no doubt with intense enjoyment. Death does not reign among the lower creatures



as king of terrors, but serves as the minister of life. He comes for the most part swiftly, and in the vast majority of animals (the sub-vertebrates) we may suppose painlessly ; casting no long shadow of fear before him, furrowing no wide wake of sorrow and desolation behind. He does but exact a quit-rent—for the most part easily paid—for the lease of joyous and happy life.<sup>1</sup> It is but in the imagination of the poet, not in the calm judgment of the philosopher, that—

“ Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravin, shrieks against his creed.”

The wonderful economy by which the substance elaborated by plants is made to sustain rank above rank of conscious life, is the means by which an enormous fabric of happiness is sustained for which otherwise earth would have no room. To ask, as is sometimes asked, whether all animals might not have been herbivorous, is simply to ask whether the structure of organic life might not have been built one storey high instead of a hundred. Had it been so, the complaint might with at least equal justice have been made that the vast resources of the soil, the air, and the waters, were wasted on so scant a population of creatures capable of enjoying conscious life.

Still it is urged that there are, to say the least, anomalous phenomena, irreconcilable with the goodness of the Creator, unless we limit either His power or His wisdom : such, for example, as diseases, venomous and parasitic animals, and poisonous plants. If no nobler

<sup>1</sup> Some animals—notably but not exclusively those whose affections are developed by intercourse with man—unquestionably suffer the pang of bereavement. In some cases it is even fatal ; but even in these cases, the suffering is confined to the mate or the parents. To man, account for it as you will, death is something very different from what it can be to any other creature.

allies can be enlisted, it is thought that ticks and tapeworms, cobras and tree-nettles, typhus and leprosy, are invincible foes to Theism. Unfortunately, too, not the slightest relief is rendered in these cases by the Gnostic theory favoured by Mr. Mill as the only refuge of the logical and honest Theist ; namely, that Nature is the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material. For the difficulties in question arise, not from the original properties of primary elements and forces, but precisely from that which might have been otherwise,—the actual constitution, in a comparatively small number of cases, of organised beings. Diseases are so largely preventible by human care and science, as irresistibly to suggest the belief that creative wisdom might prevent them altogether. The sting of the rattlesnake and the deadly sap of the upas are the result not of intractable material, but of specially adapted organs. Of all these apparent exceptions and anomalies, parasitic animals are perhaps the most perplexing to our thought, as well as repulsive to our taste. That they exist simply to annoy creatures higher up in the scale of life, is a rash and wild assumption, out of harmony with the whole system of Nature. Low as they are, they have their humble place at the great banquet of life. They inspire disgust in our minds, and I doubt not were intended to inspire it. Nothing seems to me weaker than to talk as though all forms of life were equally beautiful, if only we could see them to be so. That is, they would be beautiful if they were beautiful ; for beauty lives in the beholding eye. If we can judge of purpose at all, we must conclude that many forms of life were *designed* to present to our minds hideous, grotesque, repulsive, or terrible ideas. And I think it probable

that the key to these riddles may lie in that feature of Nature last treated, namely, its intellectual and moral significance.

But suppose that in the present stage of our knowledge these riddles remain without a key. Suppose that in this vast scheme and fabric of things, in which Newton's 'child on the sea-shore' is still the emblem of the true philosopher, there is a residuum of mystery of which we can give no account on any theory, hard to reconcile with our dim notions of goodness and wisdom. What then? Can Infinite Wisdom have no secrets? Can nothing be right but what we can explain? What is the sum of these perplexities, were it twenty-fold what it is, compared with the stupendous bulk and immense variety of evidence in proof of creative goodness? Or what is it less than mental or moral obliquity to listen to nothing in the great chorus of life but its discords; to fix our vision only on the shadows in the landscape; and so to busy our eyes peering into pits and crannies in search of monstrous or abortive shapes, as to have no vision of the vast panorama of earth and sun and sky, filled with happy life as with beauty and sunshine?

Yes! It is still true that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Putting out of view Man, for whom alone suffering has a moral character, both in root and in fruit, and is capable of being transmuted into priceless blessing, the sum of suffering—whether accidental or inevitable—is but a minute fraction of the sum of happiness; a light discount on the immense revenue of conscious enjoyment. In the joy which it is to a healthy, vigorous animal merely to live, and the special pleasure waiting on every sense and conscious function; in the vivid happiness of young creatures and of children

—for ever springing as a fresh fountain of joy, untroubled by the sorrows of so many generations, in the homes of men ; in the elaborate variety and exquisite adaptation of the different kinds of food ; in the savours and perfumes, the melodies and harmonies, the glorious decoration of colours and forms, the delicious glow of sunny warmth and no less delicious coolness of the breeze and the wave, the jubilant sense of strenuous exertion, and luxurious sweetness of rest, enriching life with so many separate springs of delight, whose charm is heightened by contrast, and by the variety of climates and of seasons ; in the complicated yet smoothly balanced adaptation of every creature to its haunts and habits ;—the eagle to its soaring flight and lightning swoop, the whale to its mile-deep plunge in ocean, the fish to its stream or lake, the mole to its burrow, the insect to its leaf ; above all, in the imperial happiness of Man, not confined like lower creatures to some tiny homestead or narrow parish or province of enjoyment, but laying all Nature under tribute ; in the profuse and magnificent, yet carefully economised, provision for his wants, comforts, luxuries,—as in coal, iron, gold, lime, granite, freestone, clay, and other minerals ; corn, wine, oil, and other fruits of the soil ; in the delights, reserved for Man alone, of social progress, intellectual culture, generous devotion to noble aims, Godlike virtue, pure and elevated love :—in all these, our intellect must surely be dull and our heart cold if we do not recognise a vast acclaim of accordant testimony, a mighty chorus of harmonious praise bearing witness that the goodness of God endureth continually ; abundantly uttering the memory of His great goodness, and singing of His righteousness, as the FATHER OF LIGHTS, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

LECTURE VII.

*THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.*



## LECTURE VII.

### THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

#### § I. *Introductory.*

WE have arrived at a point where it may be useful to take stock of our argument. Earnestly labouring to make every step good as we advanced, we have reached two conclusions, which may be either evaded or mystified; but which appear incapable of refutation by solid reasoning.

Our first conclusion is, that the UNITY of Nature is an intellectual and moral, or, in one word, a spiritual unity. That is to say, it is not a material unity, since there is no intelligible sense in which Nature can be said to be materially one; but it is a unity of plan, law, harmonious relation, beauty, significance, and moral purpose. Such a unity can have no possible existence save in an all-comprehending Mind. It cannot have its root in the separate parts of Nature, since each one of the ultimate unchangeable atoms of which the universe is built has no conceivable properties or intelligible existence save as related to its fellow-atoms. Yet the unity, whether we can explain it or not, *is there*. It is real. Every atom bears witness to it. Consequently, the MIND in which alone the wisdom and benevolence which this unity implies can have any existence, must be real also. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the

world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.”

Our second conclusion is, that the unity of Nature IN TIME — its history, or progressive development — is likewise an intellectual and moral unity; necessarily implying a Mind in which the end was foreseen from the beginning. ‘Evolution’ (as Mr. Spencer himself has candidly confessed<sup>1</sup>) is a philosophical misnomer. The process of Nature (as he admits) would much more justly be described as ‘Involution.’ Evolution is the unfolding of that which is contained within a thing; or it is the extracting of the root from which a number is formed. Involution is the producing of greater complexity, or the raising of a number to higher powers. Now what we see in the historic development of Nature is not the unfolding of what was wrapped up in the primary atoms and forces; for the atoms emerge from all changes unchanged, containing no less and no more than in the beginning; and the sum total of physical forces, we are told, is equally constant. What we see is INVOLUTION — raising to higher powers; complexity continually increasing; a process of which what Mr. Spencer calls ‘differentiation of parts’ constitutes but a small portion. For with the increasing distinctness of parts, the mutual dependence of the parts increases likewise, together with the subservience of every part to the type and to the purpose of the whole.

We may accept the term ‘Evolution’ as a just description of the processes and of the total progress of Nature with one qualification: it is ideal, not material, evolution. That which is unfolded, in which every form

<sup>1</sup> Only, so far as I am aware, in a single sentence of his *First Principles*; apparently with no perception that the admission is fatal to his philosophy.



and movement of Nature was originally wrapped up, is plan, design, systematic purpose. The material remains the same now as in the beginning. What has been added at every stage is *new thought*—new governing ideas. Let us take as an illustration the development of any human art, institution, or society. Here it is manifest that the so-called Evolution is the continuous work of mind. Only by a metaphor (though a natural, expressive, unavoidable metaphor) can an ancient art or language be said to be the parent of its modern representative. The ‘progressive differentiation’ is the result of the continued combined action of a multitude of minds, whose mutual reaction, inherited tendencies, sympathetic impulses, common habits, and, above all, common language, constitute an organic unity; but in which each new-born mind furnishes a fresh impulse, count it for never so little, and into which every now and then a mind of original genius and power introduces a new force altogether incalculable. Exactly so, the evolution of the complete plant or animal from the germ, or of the entire series of living types, is explicable as a continuous action of mind, though the method of that action is impenetrably concealed. The strict parallel to the atheistic theory of creation would be an *amental* theory of any art,—say painting; showing how the art and its products were evolved by slow historic gradations from the scratches made by passing boulders on the rocks, and the clouds, stripes, and spots of colour on flowers, without any intervention of human intellect, feeling, or will.<sup>1</sup>

We might now advance from the consideration of the witness which Nature bears to the existence and attri-

<sup>1</sup> See Note E, in Appendix.

butes of the Creator to that of the witness borne by Human Nature, and chiefly by the Moral Nature of Man. Such might, at first sight, seem our most orderly course. But as human nature originates no knowledge, save in response to some impulse or impression, material or spiritual, from without, so the real value of this witness lies in the response given by the heart and conscience to what is believed to be the voice of God. Human Nature, moreover, cannot be severed from human History, nor human History from the controlling influence of what (truly or falsely) is called Revelation. Even the life of the Greeks and Romans, who are the intellectual and political ancestors of the German as well as of the Latin nations, cannot be understood apart from those religious beliefs which may with much probability be regarded as traditions of a primeval revelation. But an immensely more powerful chain of influence, every link of which is historical, connects, through Christianity, the tent of the patriarch Abraham with the intellectual and social life, moral character, and public institutions, of all the nations of modern Christendom. Our next inquiry, therefore, must necessarily concern the claims and nature of Revelation.

## § II. *The Idea of Revelation.*

Revelation is neither an unreal nor an unfamiliar process. The daily life of every one of us is a perpetual revelation of his inner self and a perpetual discovery of the inner selves of others. The consciousness (including memory) of each human being is an unseen spiritual world to every one else. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"

Some men spend much of their energy in the effort to keep the key of their inner self always in their own hands. Yet their secrets ever and anon ooze out. If speech does not utter them, silence implies them ; looks betray them ; tones express what words cannot,—nay, even what words deny ; actions speak louder than words. Persons whom we have never seen, or who no longer inhabit our world, may become more intimately known to us than our next-door neighbours, by their reported words and actions ; by the works they have executed ; by the feelings they have inspired in others ; by writings, which are speech and action in one. We may even detect in another that of which he himself is ignorant, or but dimly conscious.

If God exist, it must be as possible for Him to reveal Himself to man as for men thus to reveal their inner selves to one another. To admit the existence of an Infinite Mind, in whose thought the universe pre-existed, and whose will it embodies, and to deny the possibility of Divine Revelation, is absurd. It were an outrage on common sense to suppose that He who endowed man with his multiform faculty of self-revelation and mutual converse, is Himself helplessly imprisoned in everlasting silence. And if God is good, revelation is probable. It is inconceivable that the Parent Mind, if loving men as His offspring and desiring their welfare, should withhold from them that knowledge which must be the noblest, the most desirable, and the most useful,—the knowledge of Himself.

The only reply that can be urged against these considerations is, that it is not a question of God's power, but of man's capacity ; and that man's intellectual nature shuts him with impassable barriers within the

narrow enclosure of phenomenal knowledge, into which no real knowledge of God can penetrate. This metaphysical scepticism I have dealt with already. Here, the common-sense answer suffices, that we do in fact possess the idea of God, and simply need to know whether it be true, *in the same sense* in which our ideas of Nature and of other minds are true. Will it bear (as they do) the stress of all the weight of action and emotion we can lay upon it? If so, it is as valid as any part of our knowledge; and this is all that religion requires as its basis.

As the possibility of revelation presupposes the existence of God, and its probability His good-will to men, it has been argued that Revelation can never *prove* God's existence. This is mere confusion of thought. What we are in quest of is not *logical proof*, which merely establishes the harmony of our conclusions with our premises; but evidence of that kind on which our fundamental premises rest. Logically, an effect presupposes a cause; phenomena presuppose substance; but, in the order of reality, the substance is revealed by the phenomena, and the cause by its effects. If an unknown person writes to you, or calls upon you, his existence is logically presupposed by his letter or visit. But practically, his letter, or still more impressively his bodily presence, proves, by revealing, the fact of his existence. For the Bible, or any other writing professedly containing a revelation from God, to furnish a logical proof of His existence, would be as unmeaning as for the writer of a letter to begin by proving his own existence. The only way in which revelation can afford proof that God exists is—by revealing Him.

Obvious considerations confine this discussion to those

Jewish and Christian writings collectively known as the Bible, or the Book. If it be admitted that the Bible contains a Divine Revelation, the question may still be discussed whether any other writings exist justly claiming to be regarded in the same light. But if the Bible contains no such revelation, it is certain there are no other sacred writings with which we need concern ourselves.

An objection has been raised *in limine* to which some writers have attached great weight. "A book revelation," it has been said, "is impossible. If a revelation of God be possible, it must be direct, intuitive, appealing to the inner spiritual sense, as words, the mere symbols of human thought, can never do." This objection has a great show of philosophic depth; but it will not bear scrutiny. There would be some force in it if the Bible were a theological treatise, or a series of such. Even in that case, just as the works of Shakespeare and Aristotle reveal to us minds—each in its own field—superior to those of other men, so the exhibition of superhuman ideas, knowledge, and moral power, might convince us that a book, or a series of books, must have a superhuman Author. And if the works composing this series were written in different languages and lands, at intervals of many centuries, and yet were found to possess an organic unity of matter, purpose, and even style, unaccountable by any mutual influence or cooperation among the writers, the evidence of the controlling power of a superhuman Mind would seem irresistible. But, in point of fact, the books composing the Bible, on their own showing, contain not a formal didactic revelation, but the record of a continuous actual revelation given through national history and personal

experience; centering and culminating in a Person, whose character and actions are as essential a part of the revelation as His words.

The superhuman origin of the Bible has been already treated of with consummate ability in that first course of the present series of *Congregational Lectures* which set so high a mark for its successors. The whole of that volume, which the more it is read the more will it be found worthy of an enduring place in English literature, may be regarded as a contribution to the special branch of evidence now before us. For any proof we may discern in the Scriptures of superhuman authorship is of necessity evidence of the existence of a superhuman author. And probably no mind will be found so curiously constructed as to admit that the Bible has a *superhuman* author, but deny that he is Divine. If the Bible is not from man, it must be from God.

Let us consider what is the idea of revelation we derive from the Bible itself, and what the denial of its Divine authorship involves. The Scriptures convey their lessons under three distinct but closely interwoven forms or methods, which may be called the HISTORICAL, the BIOGRAPHICAL, and the PROPHEITICAL (or *personal*). Intertwined with these again is a fourth method of teaching, conveying, if veracious, the most direct revelation of God—the MIRACULOUS.

The first method forms the most prominent characteristic of the Bible. The Hebrew Scriptures profess to trace, from the first father of mankind, the descent and fortunes of a single race; and, within that race, of a single line, which from the eleventh century B.C. became a royal line. This line, according to the genealogies preserved by Matthew and Luke, emerged from

an obscurity of five centuries in the person of JESUS ; while the Jewish race, destroyed, scattered, and despised as a nation, rose to the unrivalled dignity of becoming the religious instructor of mankind. With the unbroken thread of this central history, that of the leading imperial nations—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome—is vitally connected ; each one, Greece excepted, in the meridian hour of its splendour. The political influence of Greece on the history of the Jewish race belongs to those four centuries (or thereabout) which intervene between the latest Hebrew and the earliest Christian Scriptures. But its intellectual influence is seen in the adoption of the Greek tongue as the language of those later Scriptures in which the religion whose channel had thus far been banked in by national and local institutions, is seen, like a river flowing into the ocean, leaving these restrictions behind and going forth to all the nations of mankind.

The Biographical element is prominent throughout the history. A single Life constitutes the centre and organic unity of the Christian Scriptures. But besides this, in the Book of Psalms, in the historical, and to some extent the prophetic, books of the Old Testament, and in the Epistles of the New Testament, we have, within marvellously narrow limits, a portraiture of personal experience and interior religious life such as all literature besides cannot match. In their loftiest aspirations, their deepest abasement, their purest and noblest purposes and emotions, the most intensely religious spirits can but repeat what has already been said—and even better said—by prophets and apostles.

With history and biography alike, the Prophetic element is interwoven. Prophecy (I need scarcely ex-

plain), as the term is used in the Bible, signifies not *prediction*, but divinely - inspired speech. Prediction was merely one function of the prophetic office, subordinate to its moral aim.<sup>1</sup> The prophetic element sometimes—as in the Proverbs and in the First Epistle of St. John, detaches itself from both history and biography, and appears in a purely didactic form, ethical or doctrinal. Prophecy, in either case, must be regarded as essentially miraculous—a direct action of the Divine mind on the human. If inspiration be conceded, miracles cannot consistently be denied.

The Idea of Revelation which we gather from the Bible, assuming its documents to be genuine, its narratives veracious, and its writers sane and honest men, is double: revelation *ab intra*, and revelation *ab extra*. Revelation in the first sense is the direct action of the Divine Mind upon selected individual human minds, imparting to them or evoking within them thoughts and feelings of which by the unaided working of their own faculties, they could never have become conscious. Revelation in the second sense is the manifestation of Divine power and presence through sensible effects, appealing to men's outward consciousness, and capable therefore of being communicated to many minds at once. This double idea of Revelation is expressed under the names of Prophecy or Inspiration, and Miracle. But these are not separated by any sharp boundary line from each other, or from the ordinary course of Nature and human affairs. For this twofold idea of Revelation will

<sup>1</sup> Even the Greek *προφήτης* means, not 'one who speaks beforehand,' but 'one who speaks for or on behalf' (*i.e.*, of God). The Hebrew term has no reference to prediction. It is curious how completely Dr. Johnson, in his Dictionary, has mistaken the proper force of this and its cognate words. See 2 Peter i. 19-21.



be wholly inadequate as representing the idea which constitutes as it were the soul of the Bible, unless we include a third conception fundamental to the other two: namely, of that perfect control and incessant oversight of the whole course of Nature, human nature included, in even its minutest parts and movements, which renders these special manifestations of God by Prophecy and Miracle not discordant, but harmonious, with the universal plan and order. Prophecy passes into sensible miracle when, as prediction, it challenges the test of reality, and receives the visible seal of accomplishment. And any natural event, such as a thunder-storm, a sudden death, the killing of a man by a lion, or an occurrence so simple as meeting a man with a pitcher of water, may take on a miraculous character if it be in fulfilment of prediction or in answer to prayer. The miraculous element in Scripture does not merely adhere to the narrative like a foreign incrustation, but interpenetrates its substance, rooting itself most intimately in the history at its most vital junctures, penetrating its vertebræ and nerve-centres, so that to eliminate the miraculous element from the Bible, you must tear its history and biography to pieces. The supernatural and the natural, miracle and the ordinary sequence of cause and effect, are thus treated not as alien regions or incoherent ideas, but as forces one of which may intersect or penetrate without disturbing the other, as sound pervades the air, or as the rainbow employs but does not check the falling shower. This unity is expressed by a word which, though it does not occur (in this sense) in Scripture, stands for one of the most prominent and characteristic of Biblical ideas,—*Providence*. The absence of any marked boundary be-

tween miracle and providence is a character of Scripture which has not always been sufficiently noted. It would be a great mistake to suppose that it indicates any confusion between the two. Nothing can be more erroneous than to imagine that the first stage of Comte's celebrated law is exemplified in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> The very idea of a miracle presupposes a settled natural order of cause and effect; for it is the exception to the ordinary course which implies the presence of a Divine power. The stable permanence of the laws of Nature is sublimely taught, though the Bible regards these laws not as philosophical generalisations, but as Divine ordinances.<sup>2</sup> Miracles are never represented as violations or suspensions of the Laws of Nature, but simply as occurrences so beyond its *ordinary course* as to betoken some special exercise of the same Divine power and will which gave to those laws existence and permanence. The majestic music of Nature flows on unbroken though the hand of the Composer calls forth a strain unheard before.

According to the Scriptural or Biblical idea of Revelation, therefore, God is revealed in Nature as truly as in prophecy or miracle; and both revelations combine and harmonise in Divine providence. But the one voice is very far from being an echo of the other. Nature is a permanent revelation, analogous to the revelation of a man's character and powers in his works. The Written Word is the record of a progressive historic revelation, analogous to the revelation which a man makes of himself in his spoken and written words and daily actions. It includes a record of the providential guidance of

<sup>1</sup> As regards his second stage, metaphysical ideas are taken for granted in the Bible, just as in ordinary reasoning; but the Hebrews had no metaphysics.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. cxix. 89-91, xxxiii. 6, 9; Jer. v. 22; Gen. viii. 22; Prov. viii. 22-29.

human affairs, national and personal; and an interpretation of common things by heaven-taught insight. It culminates in the personal history, character, and doctrine of Him of whom his servant Paul wrote,—“The second man is the Lord from heaven;” and whom his disciples believed, and do still believe, to be a personal manifestation of the unseen God.

The denial therefore of the superhuman authorship of the Bible includes the denial of inspiration, the denial of miracle, the denial of providence, and the denial of anything beyond the unaided powers of human nature in the teaching and life of Jesus Christ.

In the remaining part of this lecture I propose to speak of the evidence under the first two heads—Inspiration and Miracle; or, in the forcible figures of the Hebrew Scriptures, *the word of God and the finger of God.*

### § III. *The Word of God.*

Chemists tell us that those meteoric stones which now and then amaze us by tumbling from the sky contain compounds which (being devoid of water) could not have been formed within the limits of our atmosphere. They carry in their inmost structure the proof of their unearthly origin. In like manner, if we find in the Bible moral ideas of a character so unique, so unlike what the rest of literature (except as influenced by the Bible) can furnish, that the human mind is not competent to have originated them, we shall have good reason to conclude that they proceed from some superhuman Mind. This persuasion will be strongly confirmed if we find these ideas, not lying disjointed,—one in one book, another in another,—but pervading many if not all the books of

Scripture, Jewish and Christian ; displaying a progressive development ; and standing to one another in systematic relation.

It seems to me that the more thoroughly and honestly the Bible is studied, the more manifest it will become that it does contain such superhuman ideas, necessitating the belief that above and beyond its human writers it reveals the existence of a superhuman Author. The masterly and comprehensive work which formed the keystone on the earthly labours of Henry Rogers leaves much ground yet untrodden. Both arguments employ the same facts ; but while his regarded the Bible as an existing product, inexplicable by mere human authorship, ours ascends from the superhuman product to the Divine Author.

1. The first of these distinctly Biblical ideas to which I would call attention, is that of DIVINE LAW. In the opening pages of sacred history, man is represented as placed by God at the very outset under law, in the shape of a distinct command, containing no moral element at all but the one fundamental duty of OBEEDIENCE. It makes no difference to our present purpose if you choose to regard the narrative in Genesis as an allegory ; though I confess myself unable to see what difficulty is thereby lightened or what truth made plainer. The idea remains the same. The idea of duty is condensed into that elementary shape in which it first meets the child's budding conscience. Divine Law is for the time represented by a single absolute prohibition. The next stage of development is exhibited in the Decalogue. Law is there seen fencing in with its sanction the primary duties of religion and filial reverence, and prohibiting such acts as are morally evil. In the

Mosaic legislation, Divine authority was claimed for a large mass of laws, civil and religious, amongst which moral precepts were interspersed; and 'the Law of God' came in time to be a phrase of wide comprehension. Out of this multiplicity another aspect of Divine Law emerged, presented with the greatest clearness and force in Psalm cxix.; namely, that of Practical Truth, in conformity to which lie our wisdom and our welfare. Christ's teaching reveals a yet higher view of law. In words quoted from Moses, but whose true breadth and depth of meaning had never been apprehended, He identifies law with love. "All the law and the prophets" hang upon the two supreme duties of love to God and love to man. This does not imply any substitution (as in some systems of ethics) of the idea of Benevolence for that of Duty. In the imperative form, "THOU SHALT love," the demand upon obedience is as emphatic as in the prohibition laid upon Adam. In like manner, the force of all moral prohibitions is included. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Lofty and comprehensive as is this view of Divine Law, it is incomplete until we combine with it a still deeper view, implied in the declaration that man was created in the image of God, taken for granted throughout the Bible, but expressed in the most distinct terms by St. Paul when he declares that the heathen, destitute of revealed law, are "a law unto themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts." The same idea is involved in the Promise which in the Epistle to the Hebrews is regarded as constituting the essence of the 'New Covenant' foretold by Hebrew prophets and identified by Christ Himself with Christianity;—to wit, that the law of God should be put into

men's minds and written on their hearts. The law of God is thus declared to be also the law of man's nature. True obedience to it is not enforced submission, but loving conformity. It is the idea or moral type of humanity. True manhood lies in obedience to it. Disobedience is not merely guilt, but ruin — the loss of the soul.

Divine Law is thus presented in the Bible with ever-unfolding majesty as (1) Authority, (2) Morality, (3) Truth of Action, (4) Love, and (5) Loyalty to Conscience and to the ideal dignity and loveliness of human nature. I pause not to comment on the incomparable grandeur, beauty, and attractiveness of this idea. I attempt no defence of its truth. I simply call attention to what I take to be its unique and, as I think, superhuman character. I leave it to those whose learning and leisure for learned research are immensely greater than mine, to say whether the whole of human literature beyond the reach of the influence of the Bible can furnish materials out of which the spontaneous working of human genius could have evolved this stupendous conception of the Law of God. Partial and scattered verbal parallelisms can no doubt easily be produced (as from the Vedas, from Buddhist writings, from Aristotle, from Confucius); were it not so, the idea would be rather *in*-human than *super*-human. But in its universality, its majesty, its inwardness, its manifold symmetry, and the clearness, directness, and closeness of moral relation it establishes between God and man, the idea of Divine Law developed in the Bible seems to me to stand absolutely alone. The resemblance and contrast between the flickering gleams of light which flash through other systems, and its steady brilliance is like that between a schoolboy's sketches

of heads and hands and feet and the perfect delineation of the human body by a master's hand.

Correlative with Divine Law are two other leading Biblical ideas : that of SIN, conceived as the transgression of Law, and that of HOLINESS, conceived of in man as moral likeness to God, and in God as that unchangeable perfection of moral character whereby He is a law to Himself. A word on these.

II. SIN, according to St. John's definition, is nonconformity to law (*ἀνομία*)—*i.e.*, to God's law. The idea of Sin developed in the Scriptures is therefore 'a growing idea,' corresponding with the progressive development of the idea of Law. Primarily, Sin is disobedience. The first sin is represented as an act of wilful disobedience to a positive command. But sin is also (2) moral evil ; it is (3) practical falsehood,—conduct which ignores our actual moral relations ; it is (4) enmity towards God, and maleficence towards men ; finally, it is represented by St. Paul as (5) a kind of *anti-law*—a tyrannous principle inwoven in our very flesh,—submission to which is death as inevitably and naturally as obedience to Divine Law is our true life.<sup>1</sup>

III. The germ idea of HOLINESS in the Hebrew Scriptures is negative ; consisting in perfect opposition to, and freedom from, sin. Sin being symbolised by defilement, the word expressing holiness appears primarily to signify Purity. We meet with this symbolic outer shell of the

<sup>1</sup> "The moral elevation of Greek Tragedy, and the contrasts of right and wrong which it sets forth, are the highest and grandest efforts of Gentile thought in a religious direction. They bring us to the very verge of Revelation, but they do not pass within it. And deep and sad, tender and pathetic, as are its pictures of human life and heroic duty, the idea of evil which enters into it so largely is yet very far short of the idea of sin which emerges on the very threshold of the Hebrew Scriptures." —*The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, by Dr. TULLOCH, p. 58.

idea in many religions. It would be an instructive though melancholy study to trace and analyse the various materialistic notions of Holiness characterising different religious and philosophical systems, and the degree in which they have narrowed and devitalised Christianity itself. Another rudimentary conception of Holiness is that of Consecration—devotion to the service of Deity. This also is capable of a purely materialistic form; things, places, and times being reckoned holy as well as persons. This notion of holiness, with all the changes that may be rung upon it, is familiar not only in heathen religions, but in mediæval Christianity and its modern counterparts. The point to be here noted is, that what in other systems is taken for the substance and essence of Holiness, appears in the Bible as the mere wrappage of a purely moral conception. In the New Testament Scriptures the symbolic robe is suffered to fly loose or drop, and the spiritual idea appears in unveiled splendour. Holiness in man is defined as the image of holiness in God, and God's holiness is regarded as consisting in his perfect wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, the immutable perfection of his moral character. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It is impossible for God to lie. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Where, but in the teaching of the Bible, are we brought face to face with this stupendous idea,—that man's moral perfection, the ideal type of spiritual manhood, consists in a resemblance to God, whereby men become "partakers of the divine nature"?<sup>1</sup>

IV. A fourth idea, which shines out in the pages of the Bible clear as a star against the night sky, is expressed

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter i. 4.



by one of the most familiar and significant words in human speech—LOVE. Yet this familiar word receives in the Bible a significance and power else unheard of. Indeed, though I have called it a familiar word, since some synonym for love must needs be found in every language, classic Greek did not furnish a term to which the New Testament writers could entrust the burden of the Divine thought.<sup>1</sup> When St. John wrote that “he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love, . . . and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,”—he employed a word which to Plato’s ear would have been barbarous. Whether Plato would have welcomed this declaration as a revelation, or derided it as an absurdity, may be questioned; but it is certain he would not have recognised it as a familiar thought.

The idea of Divine Love, forming as it were the flower and crown of the Theology of the Bible, is of slower development than the ideas before enumerated. Yet it is clearly marked, in a national reference, in Deuteronomy—appropriately there rather than in the earlier books of Moses; it breathes with deep tenderness and even passionate fervour, in a personal sense, in some of the Psalms and other prophetic scriptures. But it is in the writings of St. John and St. Paul that it emerges in its full completeness in the triple aspect of the love of God towards mankind, the love of God to each of his children, and love to God as a personal affection. “We love him because he first loved us.”

<sup>1</sup> “It should never be forgotten that *ἀγάπη* is a word born within the bosom of revealed religion. It occurs in the Septuagint, but there is no example of its use in any heathen writer whatever: the utmost they attained to here was *φιλανθρωπία* and *φιλαδελφία*, and the last never in any sense but as the love between brethren in blood.”—TRENCH, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 42.

v. Another distinctive, and as it seems to me super-human, Biblical idea is that of FAITH. It is represented as a threefold energy,—intellectual, emotional, voluntary;—Belief, Confidence, Trust; constituting the very root of the religious life. This topic is so wide that I content myself with thus barely indicating it; only adding, that in this case the New Testament writers had not (as in the case of ‘Love’) to coin a word; they found one in classic and conventional use in the same general sense in which they use it; yet they have filled it with a force, a depth, and a glory, as much beyond its heathen significance as flame in oxygen outshines the same flame burning in common air.

vi. This line of thought would lead us far. One more of these characteristic ideas is too important to be passed unnoted: the idea of supreme Happiness—in other words, of HEAVEN. One of the most barometric tests of character is our notion of Happiness. It rises and falls with our moral level. What idea of Heaven would be naturally formed by men in general, if told that it is a state of perfect and endless happiness? They would conceive all such causes of suffering as pain, sickness, poverty, death, finally banished, and all conceivable sources of enjoyment in uncloying abundance and perpetuity. Is it in human nature to place the central attraction and all-embracing fulness of supreme happiness neither in self nor in circumstance, but in God? This is the Bible idea. To see God, and to be called the children of God, are the crowning beatitudes of the Gospel. To know the Only Living and True God is declared to be life eternal. A world into which nothing that defileth can enter, is proposed as the goal of our hope. To be admitted to the fellowship of a sinless

society ; to be at home where God dwells with man ; to be changed into his image by the Spirit of God ; to be holy as God is holy, pure as Christ is pure, and to be for ever with the Lord :—these sublime and unearthly prospects form the ideal happiness for the sake of which we are to fix our affections not on things earthly, visible, and temporal, but on things heavenly, unseen, and eternal. The Hebrew Scriptures, it is true, but dimly shadow forth this blessedness as in store for the righteous beyond death. So much the more astonishing is it to find them sounding the same keynote ; placing supreme happiness, even in this life, in knowing and loving God ; and breathing this unearthly joy in such words as these : “Thou art my portion, O God ! Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

Whence was this conception of supreme happiness drawn ? Do the spontaneous tendencies of human nature, Oriental or Western, ancient or modern, explain it ? Are these unearthly glories a mere reflection on the clouds of man’s native fancies and aspirations ; or are they reflections in human spirits of light from above ? Perchance it will be answered, that though by no means natural to other races, they were natural to the Hebrew people, who inherited from their ancestor Abraham a powerful religious genius, as characteristic of the race as the genius of the Greeks for art and philosophy, or of the Romans for war and government. I am compelled to reply, that this notion (confidently as it has been advanced) is in flat contradiction to the facts of Hebrew history. If Abraham possessed a splendid religious genius, he certainly did not bequeath it to his descendants. In the life of Jacob—that keen, wary, industrious, worldly-

prosperous, not very noble-minded shepherd-chief—occasional Divine visions and a death-bed prophecy cross the general tenor of the story, like threads of gold woven into the haircloth of the shepherd's tent. In like manner, the prophetic dreams and interpretations of Joseph, indispensable as they are to his history, shoot across the path of the busy, sagacious, indomitable man of action, as light from above; not, like the flashing intuitions which are the guiding stars of meditative genius, as light from within. Jacob and Joseph in these respects were types of the race. The genius of the Hebrew people was intensely practical. They had a marvellous talent for organisation. They were shepherds, warriors, husbandmen. But if they had a religious tendency whose innate strength was all but unconquerable, it was towards idolatry; not imaginative and refined, but sensual, licentious, cruel;—the idolatry not of Athens and Rome, but of the Canaanites and the Syrians. The entire Mosaic ritual is an elaborate clothing of religious ideas in material symbols, to bring them down to the level of a people capable of strong religious emotions, but incapable of refined spiritual thought. The history of Moses' leadership is that of a forty years' unsuccessful struggle to train this people to a pure, strong, loving, obedient faith in the One God,—the God not of Israel only, but “of the spirits of all flesh.” Their whole subsequent history was of a piece, as Moses foretold it would be. No feature of Jewish history is so remarkable as the struggle maintained during the greater part of a thousand years by successive prophets, not merely against a corrupt court or a tyrannical monarch, but against the whole mass of the nation, the priesthood included. The historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament are one long

indictment of national irreligion and immorality. It needed a special revelation to assure Elijah that there were even a few thousands of loyal dissenters from the state-established idolatry. The temporary reforms of iconoclast kings were swept away with eager popular assent by their successors. Even after the Babylonian captivity had at length cured the national tendency to idolatry, the Jews showed no capacity for spiritual ideas. Their religious progress consisted in elaborating the microscopic formalism of the Pharisees; and their religious reaction in falling back upon the cold sceptical morality of the Sadducees.

Christianity claimed to be the predicted, necessary, and, so to speak, natural development of Judaism. Dropping what was material, symbolical, and national, it unfolded that which was spiritual and universal. It presents the same sharp contradiction as the ministry of the Old Testament prophets, with the tone and tenor of national life. Under the Maccabees the military genius of Israel had a splendid resurrection. But there was no corresponding resurrection of the prophetic spirit. Under the Herods, idolatry again reared its head, in the guise of Gentile culture and courtly fashion. Luxury grew with wealth. Society was poisoned at the fountain-head by licentiousness. Religion was being slowly killed by formalism. No symptom of promise was discernible when, suddenly as a meteor streaming across a dark sky, the awful voice of John the Baptist shook the nation with a summons to immediate repentance, and with the announcement that Messiah had come. The conflict which ensued was inevitable. As Christianity claimed to be the realisation and completion of all that the prophets from Moses onward had taught, so its re-

ception by the Nation was the counterpart of that which all the prophets from Moses onward had experienced. The tears of Jesus over the City stained with the blood of the prophets, the indignant witness borne by Stephen against those who, like their fathers, "always resisted the Holy Ghost;" the entire narrative of the Gospels and the Acts, with its illustrations in the Epistles, all teach one lesson. No theory which ascribes the unique character of the religious ideas of the Bible to the native genius and sensibility of the Hebrew race will bear an hour's serious examination.

On not a few minds the foregoing line of argument will make little impression, because the ideas on which it turns appear to them uninteresting, or even repulsive. This is to be regretted; but it is a personal matter which does not affect the force of the argument. Perhaps, if such persons are distinguished for culture and intellect, it may even augment it.

This argument involves a consideration of immense interest,—that of the unity of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> The unity is not merely literary, such as might result from the influence of earlier writers upon later. It is a vital unity, arising out of the subject-matter. We are looking at the Bible not as a book or collection of books, but as a product which either can or can not be accounted for by purely human authorship, and which I maintain cannot be so accounted for. We are considering it, not strictly speaking as a revelation, but as professedly the record of a continuous revelation, carried on through thousands

<sup>1</sup> This topic has been admirably illustrated by Mr. Rogers, with the expression of regret that he could not follow it out more fully. He has dwelt on one of the peculiar ideas of the Bible, which I have for that reason passed by;—the conception of the Spiritual Kingdom of God. See *Super-human Origin of the Bible*, Lect. IV.

of years ; in which certain germinant religious ideas were by degrees developed into the harmonious symmetry and purely spiritual beauty in which Christianity announced them as the Religion of Mankind.

Our argument therefore involves no particular theory of inspiration, or of the relation of the prophetic gift to the written word. Supposing (what I do not personally believe) that this relation was only like that of the landscape imaged in the poet's eye to the description of the same landscape in his poem ; that the intuition of Divine truth involved no security against error in the statement of it ; that the prophetic insight and impulse only flash intermittently, not shine continuously, along the pages of Scripture ; and that so large a margin must be allowed for the *merely* human element in Scripture,—for inaccuracy and allegory in traditional narratives, for personal prejudice, mental infirmity, or imperfect moral perception, impeding the writers in the expression of Divine thoughts,—as to impose on us a severe task in smelting out the pure gold of revealed truth from the imbedding ore : all this would in no degree affect the evidence for the reality of a Divine revelation, and consequently the existence of the Divine Being so revealed, provided it still remains true that those leading ideas of the Bible which form the backbone and vital marrow of Judaism, and the heart and brain, as well as skeleton, of Christianity, are such as the mind of man, without superhuman aid, could never have produced.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I discount these hypothetical concessions, not through any personal sympathy with views the prevalence of which I lament, and for which 'advanced' seems to me a sarcastic misnomer ; but because I am anxious to keep the argument perfectly clear from any opinions of my own regarding Inspiration ; and also because we are thus discharged from encumbering the argument with a subordinate discussion. See *Superhuman Origin of the Bible*. Appendix, No. VIII.

§ IV. *The Finger of God.*

Miracles, like Prophecy, logically presuppose the existence of God ; that is, if by a miracle we mean an occurrence possible only through a special exercise of Divine power. By believers in God's existence, Miracles may be appealed to and accepted as the seal of Divine testimony to a message professing to come from God. But, on the other hand, as in the case of Prophecy, since an effect which can be assigned to but one cause demonstrates, if real, the existence of that cause, Miracles, if they have really taken place, are evidence of the real existence of a Power or Being adequate to produce them. What is presupposed in the order of logic must pre-exist in the order of nature.

The character and force of this evidence may vary, according to the nature of the alleged Miracles, as well as according to the value of the testimony to their occurrence, from a weak presumption to irresistible certainty. To speak, therefore, indiscriminately of Miracles in the lump, leads only to confusion of thought. Rigid account ought to be taken of their moral as well as material character; of the relation, when they are alleged to have occurred in groups, of each miracle to others of the same group, and of the whole group to other reported groups, and to the established facts of human history; of the ease or difficulty with which in each case natural events may have been mistaken for miraculous, or credit and currency given to unreal miracles through illusion, through the inaccuracy which characterises the majority of observers, and the exaggerations in which many well-meaning persons indulge, or through the transformation to which a narrative originally truthful is exposed in



passing from mouth to mouth. Independent of all these is the question whether there be room for suspecting imposture in either the performer or the witnesses. The tricks of conjurors appear to the keenest observers, unacquainted with the art of legerdemain, not less impossible than miracles ; yet we are well assured that if the method were explained to us, we should be able to understand how they are done, though not to do the like.

The enumeration of these particulars sufficiently shows that it must be difficult to establish the truth of a miraculous narrative. We might find it difficult to be sure of the reality of a miracle even had we witnessed it : it is more difficult to be sure of it on the testimony of others. But from difficult to impossible is a long step. Accurately speaking, nothing is impossible but what implies a contradiction. Thus, if there were but a single ball on a table, and one set of spectators testified that they saw it roll from north to south and bound into the air ; and another set, that they saw it at the given moment roll from south to north, and drop on the floor, there might be many theories to explain these inconsistent testimonies. But the one thing of which we should all be certain would be, that the ball was not in two places at once. This is an impossibility of the occurrence of which neither our own senses nor any amount of testimony could convince us ; because our fundamental conception of a body is of something occupying a bounded place in space, which cannot occupy another space at the same moment, or without moving through the intervening space ; and if we allow ourselves to doubt this, we may as well doubt that people see with their eyes, or that words have any meaning, or that we know anything at all. The most devout theist is guilty of no irreverence

when he affirms, understanding an impossibility to mean a contradiction, that God cannot perform impossibilities; for this is only to declare that omnipotence and reason are in harmony, and that the Creator cannot at once maintain and destroy the principles on which He has founded both the universe and the human mind.<sup>1</sup>

Miracles, therefore, are not impossible unless they imply a contradiction. And it would seem absurd to suppose that it is possible for a miracle to take place, and yet impossible to know that it has taken place. The object, however, of Hume's celebrated argument is to prove that miracles, if not absolutely impossible, are so highly improbable that no testimony can establish the fact of their occurrence except such testimony as we neither possess nor can expect to possess, namely, a testimony strong enough to countervail universal experience. For the alleged improbability of miracles consists in their being at variance with the universal experience of mankind. The fallacy of this argument has been repeatedly pointed out. It assumes at the outset what it pretends to prove in the conclusion. The testimony to the actual occurrence of miracles claims to be a part, and a very considerable part, of the recorded experience of mankind. To subtract this testimony, and to call the remainder (namely, all that human testimony which does *not* bear witness to miracles) the universal experience of mankind, is to beg the whole question.<sup>2</sup> But although

<sup>1</sup> Transubstantiation, not as a vague faith, but as its 'doctrine is *defined* in philosophical language by the Church of Rome, is not a miracle, but an impossibility; or, rather, several impossibilities rolled into one. To it Hume's sarcasm is strictly applicable, that the faith which assents to it "subverts all the principles of the understanding."

<sup>2</sup> "It is a miracle that a dead man should come to life, because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must therefore be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event

this fallacy has been so thoroughly exposed, that to refute Hume is to slay the slain, yet the spirit of his Essay survives in that contemporary scepticism regarding miracles which invokes the authority and affects the tone of science. This spirit consists in a subjective *a priori* conviction that miracles are impossible; if not in the strict sense which I have assigned to the word, yet in the sense of being so at variance with the ascertained order of Nature as to be wholly incredible.

The scientific feeling is in the present day so widely diffused, powerfully influencing many whose actual acquaintance with science is very small, that this so-called scientific objection against miracles severely oppresses many minds having no sympathy with scepticism. By a remarkable intellectual revolution, miracles, until recently regarded as the main bulwark of Christianity, have come to be looked at by not a few sincerely religious persons as its chief difficulty. They believe the miracles because they believe in Christianity, but they do not believe in Christianity because of its miraculous evidence, and would rather the miracles were not there. What has the progress of science to do with this revolution of thought and feeling? It has this to do with it: the conception of Natural Law has attained a vividness, force, and majesty never before recognised, and has assumed a disproportioned importance in men's thoughts. For any conception, how just soever, becomes disproportioned and exaggerated when that which is would not merit the appellation." — *Essay on Miracles*, Part I. If "it has never been observed in any age or country" that one rose from the dead, then of course the resurrection of Jesus is not a fact. But this "never" assumes the very matter in debate. In accordance with Hume's definition of the miraculous, M. Vacherot defines the doctrine of the supernatural as "La doctrine qui fait entrer la dérogation des lois de la Nature dans le gouvernement du monde."

a purely intellectual generalisation takes hold of the imagination and gets itself enrolled among realities. This is what has happened with the scientific idea of Physical Law. It has become an idea of imagination. It is invested with the attributes of reality, enthroned as a power, and almost personified as a deity. Writers who denounce metaphysics and ridicule efficient causes, erect physical laws into metaphysical entities, and ascribe effects to the 'working of law,' as if it were an efficient cause.<sup>1</sup> Religious minds, captivated and awe-stricken by these Idols of the Laboratory (as perhaps Bacon might have named them), and desirous to conform their faith to what they understand to be the teaching of science, come to think of Divine omnipotence as a sort of limited monarchy, where every exercise of power is rigidly prescribed by law. Miracles appear to them to be violations by the Creator of the established order of His universe,—an intolerable conception; and the scientific objection is thus transformed into a religious one. "God cannot be thought of as setting the example of breaking his own laws."<sup>2</sup>

The neck of this objection is broken by simply denying Hume's definition of a miracle—that "it is a violation of the Laws of Nature." Some Christian apologists have thought to improve this definition by speaking of a suspension rather than a violation of physical law;—a distinction without a difference. Others have suggested that the apparent violation of natural law may really be the action of a higher law;—an explanation which explains nothing. For if 'law' be taken in the strict scientific sense as an intellectual generalisation, express-

<sup>1</sup> The inaccuracy of this phrase has been already pointed out. See Lecture VI. p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> See WESTCOTT'S *Characteristics of the Gospel Miracles*, Sermon I.

ing an observed uniformity in nature, then, no doubt, if miracles are facts, there must be some general statement under which they might be summed up ; but as we do not know what this is, it is useless to talk of it. But if, under the phrase, 'action of law,' the idea of efficient causation has surreptitiously crept in, this is merely saying that miracles are possible—if there be an adequate cause to produce them ; which no one doubts. The truth is, that this whole notion of a miracle as consisting in the violation, superseding, or suspension of a law of nature, is false or misleading ; not merely as presenting the repulsive incongruity of a transgression by the Creator of his own laws, but as foreign to the true idea of a miracle ; involving, moreover, an enormous and unnecessary assumption utterly void of proof. Take, for example, the miracle of walking on the sea. There is one supposition, and but one, on which this miracle (if actually performed) was a suspension of natural law ; viz., that the attraction of gravitation ceased to act—that the body of Him who walked on the waves instead of sinking beneath them, was for the time deprived of its natural weight. Nothing in the narrative demands this assumption. If, on the other hand, some force was exercised which counteracted that of gravitation, then there was no more a violation of physical law than when a man urges a ball uphill or throws a stone into the air. Our ignorance of what this force may have been makes no difference. Supposing such a power exerted, the violation of law would have been in the effect—namely, of being able to walk on the water—*not* following.

By the 'true idea of a miracle' I understand the idea drawn from the miraculous narratives of the Bible ; for the consideration of any other alleged miracles lies

outside our discussion. We should search the Scriptures in vain for any formal definition of a miracle. The Bible does not deal in definitions. Nevertheless it is not difficult to gather a general idea pervading the Scriptures of the true nature and evidential force of miracles. As to its nature, a miracle is 'a wonder;' as to its purpose, it is 'a sign.' Both views are comprehended in the confession of the Egyptian magicians, "*This is the finger of God!*" More definitely, a miracle is a manifestation of power analogous to the action of human will, but in degree, in kind, or both in degree and kind, so transcending human capacity as to involve a superhuman agent. We must somewhat enlarge this definition if we wish to include prophecy, in the sense of fulfilled prediction, which, as Bacon says, is "a miracle of knowledge." It has been supposed to belong to the idea of a miracle that the superhuman agency therein manifested must be Divine,—the immediate action of the Almighty Creator.<sup>1</sup> If we divest ourselves of theologic stiffness, and draw our conception simply from the Bible, we shall find, I think, that the evidence that the power manifested is Divine, consists not in the simple miraculousness of the facts, but in the scale on which they are wrought, their relation to one another, and to the general course of human affairs, and their moral character and purpose. The Scriptures (as we have already noted) draw no sharply defining line between miraculous events and the ordinary course of nature. Occurrences are narrated which the reader is at liberty to account miraculous or natural as he sees fit. Through "the miracles of Providence," as Mr. Westcott calls them,

<sup>1</sup> See the definitions given by Dr. PYE SMITH, *First Lines of Christian Theology*, p. 61.

the one province of Divine activity melts imperceptibly into the other. In this indeterminate border-land are perhaps to be found the most impressive tokens of Divine agency; since it is a greater thing, and seems more to belong to the Creator, to control without disturbing the ordinary course of nature, than to break through it as if with a foreign force.

Divested of verbal disguises, the question of the possibility of miracles simply amounts to this:—*Is God as free to act as man?* Can He, if He sees fit, produce definite sensible effects in outward nature and in human minds, just as we can, but of course on a scale corresponding with omnipotence? This seems to be at bottom the same thing as to ask whether we are to think of God as personal,—that is, as free intelligent Will,—or as an impersonal Power, blindly working by necessity. For to believe that the universe is the work of supreme Wisdom, Will, and Love, but yet that like an engineer who cannot manage the machine he has constructed, or a ship-builder unable to steer his own ship, the Almighty Creator has his hands so tied by his own laws that He is denied that freedom of action which He has nevertheless bestowed upon us, seems the weakest, shallowest, and most unphilosophical, as well as least religious, of all conceptions of the Deity. The denier of the possibility of miracles, if he be intellectually consistent, has his choice between pantheism and atheism.

On the other hand, supposing the reality of the miracles recorded in Scripture to be admitted, as established by competent historical testimony, then it seems impossible to entertain any reasonable doubt that in their multitude and variety, in the stupendous scale of some, and the minute knowledge and perfect control

of nature implied in others, and in their relation to nature and to human nature, they furnish irresistible evidence of Power not merely superhuman, but unlimited ; power not inferior to that shown in creation. And when the moral purpose assigned to these miracles is considered, whether in the practical repression of moral evil, in manifesting Divine goodwill to men, or in sealing truth with Divine testimony,—we seem to see no less convincing proofs of Wisdom and Goodness to which we can set no bound.

The argument therefore stand thus. *A priori*:—If God exists, as the Bible claims to reveal Him, miracles are possible. *A posteriori*:—If the miracles recorded in the Bible are historically true, God exists.

It may still be contended that, although miracles cannot be proved impossible, except by proving that God does not exist, yet they are so highly improbable that no testimony can establish the fact of their occurrence. If they have really happened, yet we cannot be sure that they have happened. Hume's argument may still be urged, though the false basis on which he rests it be surrendered. It is always more likely, it may be said, that the professed witnesses were deceived ; deceived themselves, or deceived others, than that a miracle really took place.

It is necessary that we here carefully distinguish two kinds of probability, which the purpose of Hume's argument led him to confound : the antecedent likelihood of the occurrence of a given event ; and the value of the evidence that it has actually occurred. When we say that such an event probably *will* happen, we mean that we have ground to expect it. When we say that it probably *did* happen, we mean that we have more reason



to believe than to disbelieve that it actually took place. The evidence warrants a certain degree of faith, though it does not amount to certainty. When we speak of 'an improbable story' we are mixing up the two kinds of probability in a way convenient enough for ordinary speech, but fatal to philosophic accuracy. We do as Hume would have us do. We deduct the antecedent improbability of the story as a sort of discount from the evidence for its truth, or add on its antecedent probability to that evidence, and the remainder or the sum (as the case may be) we regard as the real amount of proof. We easily believe a likely story on weak testimony, and we are slow to believe an unlikely story even on strong testimony. This rough-and-ready method serves us well enough on the whole in ordinary matters, and saves much time and trouble. But it very often leads us astray. The likely story turns out to be fiction; the incredible story to be fact. Antecedent probability or improbability has no real measurable relation to positive evidence. That an event is in the highest degree likely, is no ground whatever for believing that it has actually occurred. The great probability regarding any given person is that he will die before he is eighty: this is no proof, if to-day is his eightieth birthday, that he is dead. In like manner, the unlikelihood that a given event would happen is no proof that it has not happened. If it has actually taken place, the antecedent improbability is destroyed, and has become a nonentity. To treat it as a still existing quantity, which we are entitled to deduct from the evidence for the event having occurred, is a sheer fallacy, though a plausible one. Let us recur to an illustration already employed for another purpose in Lecture vi. Suppose a lottery-

wheel contains a hundred tickets, of which three are prizes and the rest blanks : there is an equal probability, viz.,  $\frac{3}{100}$ , in favour of the first drawn or the last, or any other, being a prize ; an equal improbability,  $\frac{97}{100}$ , against it. The improbability that the prize tickets will be consecutively drawn is enormous. Still more unlikely is it that they will be the first three, or the last three. If, nevertheless, the three prizes are drawn out first, the antecedent probability of  $\frac{3}{100}$  in favour of every one of the undrawn tickets is destroyed. It has become certain that they are blanks. If, on the contrary, a succession of blanks be drawn, the probability rises at each drawing in rapidly increasing ratio that the next drawn will be a prize ; until, if ninety-seven blanks be drawn, the high probability that the ninety-seventh ticket would be a prize vanishes into nothing, and it becomes absolutely certain that the three remaining are the prize tickets. The antecedent probability and the actual fact are thus totally independent of one another.

Probability and improbability are simply subjective factors of belief. They have no measurable objective value. They incline or disincline us to believe. But the only objective warrant of belief or of disbelief is the strength or weakness of evidence.

It belongs to the idea of a miracle that it should be not merely improbable, but, in the ordinary course of nature, impossible. If it were naturally possible, it might be a prodigy, but not a miracle.<sup>1</sup> It is because we believe

<sup>1</sup> Not but what it is quite conceivable that an event within the ordinary course of nature—such as a sudden change of wind, apparently in answer to prayer, saving a ship from imminent wreck—may in reality be miraculous. But we can have no proof that it is. Christians commonly call such events, which are frequent enough, ‘providential,’ not miraculous.

ordinary natural causation incompetent to produce it, that we ascribe it to a special exercise of Divine power. To adduce the physical impossibility of miracles as proof that they have never been wrought, is thus to reason in a circle. That is just what makes them miracles. The only real improbability of miracles, granting the existence of God as an intelligent free agent, would be the absence (could this be proved) of any worthy moral end justifying this extraordinary exercise of Divine power.<sup>1</sup>

The argument against the possible and probable occurrence of miracles thus appears on examination void of scientific value. It rests on one of two assumptions: either that there is no God, in the sense of an intelligent free agent, at least as free to control nature as we are; or else that there has never been any such necessity in human history, or great moral end in God's purpose, as would have made it wise, right, and worthy of God to work miracles. Neither of these stupendous assumptions can pretend to show an atom of evidence.

Taking it therefore as proved that miracles may have occurred, and, if they have occurred, may be substantiated by suitable evidence, there are some characteristics of the miracles recorded in the Bible which merit careful study; not only because they place a wide gulf of unlikeness between these and the miracles or prodigies recorded in other histories, but because they supply weighty internal evidence of truth. To one of these characteristics I wish to call attention, because, so far as I know, it has not received the consideration it deserves. We may call it the Specific Appropriateness of the miracles related in Scripture to their place and office in

<sup>1</sup> This would constitute 'moral impossibility.' See the acute article on '*Impossibility*' in the Appendix to WHATELY'S *Logic*.

human history, as well as to the particular ends for which and persons by whom they are said to have been wrought. Miracles are not scattered through the Bible equably or promiscuously. They occur for the most part in groups or series, separated from one another by wide intervals of time. They produce on the reader an impression of much greater continuousness and multitude than belong to them, from the fact that those parts of history with which they are concerned are selected for detailed narrative, while large intervening spaces are briefly summarised or passed over in silence. They cluster around certain great crises and leading personages in that history, which though it is the story of the rise, progress, and fall of a nation, is everywhere represented in the Bible as being in its essence the history of the revelation of God to Mankind.

If that history be true, this revelation has had certain grand stages or epochs of progressive illumination, each having reference to the general state of Mankind ; by which the Jewish people, or a certain portion of them, were trained to become the religious teachers of the world. At each of these epochs, miracles come into the foreground, but not miracles of the same character. The specific character, physical and moral, of each group is as exactly suited to its own stage of revelation as it would be misplaced in any other. We cannot imagine the miracles of the Exodus wrought anywhere but in Egypt, by any prophet but Moses, or with any purpose but that ascribed to them—of prostrating in ignominious ruin the gods of Egypt, and delivering Israel as the people of Jehovah by an unmistakable exercise of Divine power. The miracles of the Desert,—the Manna, the Water from the Rock, the Giving of the Law, the

Judgments on the rebellious—had all one aim : to teach the fundamental lesson of religion,—that the God who had saved them from their tyrants, who was forming them into a nation, and who required from them absolute obedience, trust, and love, was no mere national deity, but the Creator of the universe, the God of all human spirits, the only living and true God. These miracles would have been as much out of place morally in any other epoch, as physically in any other place or circumstances. The group of miracles, again, gathering round the ministry of Elijah and Elisha — miracles both of judgment and of mercy—are appropriate to the exact place assigned to them, as a testimony to the mission of inspired protestant reformers in the midst of national apostacy. Equally appropriate were the miracles of the Captivity—the Fiery Furnace, the Writing on the Wall the Lions' Den, to that crisis in the life of the Chosen People when, doomed for seventy years to national death, they were yet destined to emerge unconsumed from the furnace, to rise as from the grave, to rebuild their Temple and City, and to see the doom of prophecy fulfilled upon their oppressors.

Lastly, the miracles ascribed to JESUS have a character uniquely their own. Some few of them remarkably resemble some of those recorded of Elijah and Elisha, though on a vaster scale. But when the disciples wished to have one of Elijah's miracles of judgment repeated, they were rebuked, as utterly misinterpreting the spirit of the new Dispensation. Jesus performed no miracles of judgment, nor yet any addressed to the nation and its rulers, like Samuel's thunder-storm or Elijah's famine. His miracles dealt with men's private life ; with their homes, their wants, their sins, their sufferings. They pre-

sented Jesus as the Saviour and Friend, not of the nation but of individuals, and invited personal faith in Him. You can no more imagine the miracles of Christ wrought by any former prophet than you can imagine the thunder and fiery terror of Sinai accompanying the Sermon on the Mount, or the earth cleaving beneath Caiaphas, Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and entombing them like Korah and his fellow-rebels.

The line of thought thus indicated will bear pursuing. I do not assert that this wonderful fitness and significance in the miracles of Scripture, the contrasts between the different groups, and the harmony of each group with its own epoch and moral aim, amount to a demonstration of their reality. But they do show that it is ignorant and shallow to lump all miracles together as alike credible or incredible, alike helpful or hostile to faith, alike worthy or unworthy of regard as evidences—and more than evidences, as component and indispensable links of Divine Revelation. These facts claim consideration. And I think the more carefully they are considered, the more they will be found to confirm the truth, the spiritual unity, and if the unity, then necessarily also the superhuman authorship of the Scripture records.

Miracles have been very commonly regarded simply as *evidences* of Revelation, indispensable credentials of a Divine message. Undoubtedly they are often so represented in Scripture. It is in this view of them that their validity has been so fiercely assailed by modern criticism, and that they have proved a stumbling-block to many Christian minds. It is not in this light that we have now been looking at them, but as constituting a distinct mode of Divine revelation, an

essential part of the religious education of Mankind, teaching what nothing else could teach. They form a systematic series ; a glorious procession of witnesses, moving, now in compact phalanx, now in scattered file, across a score of centuries, attending the vocal march of Prophecy as a company of torch-bearers might move side by side with a company of minstrels. Scepticism may question their reality, deriding them as a phantom host. But only the dullest stupidity could ignore their marvellous grandeur, unearthly beauty, and profound significance. They touch with God's finger every secret spring of nature, from the course of the sun in the heaven to the silent falling of the night dew. They lay the bridle of prompt obedience on the lightning and the hurricane, the earthquake and the storm-driven waves, and control with equal ease the treasures of the rain and the scanty remnant of oil and meal in the widow's cottage. Plant-life in its springing and withering, human life in the mystery of every sense and faculty, in health and sickness, birth and death ; human affairs in all their complexity, from the fortunes of armies and empires to the setting free of a lonely prisoner or the curing of a sick child : all are seen responsive to a power which nothing is either vast enough or minute enough to evade. The awful portal of the grave, like the iron gate of Peter's dungeon, swings back at the Divine word, and, when need requires, the invisible dwellers in other worlds mingle as men with men, or emerge in unearthly glory for warning or comfort, deliverance or destruction.

With this immense variety in the illustration of Divine power we find an equally wide range of moral significance. The interval is wide from the celestial voices

and apparitions which guided Abraham, or the dreams of his great grandson, to the tremendous manifestation of Deity at Sinai on the one hand, or, on the other, to the full but gentle stream of Divine goodness in the miracles of Christ. Yet there is no discord or confusion. Harmoniously, and as if on system, every moral attribute of Deity is illustrated in turn, beginning with that personal relation of God to men on which religion, according to the Bible idea of it, is based : truth, faithfulness, righteousness, opposition to sin, holiness, mercy, love. The miracles of the Bible, taken as a whole, embody, in a form which seizes and fills the imagination, every idea which reason can frame of the moral character of God. Miracles fill up an inevitable chasm in the evidence furnished by the structure and regular course of nature of the existence of a supreme creating Mind. Admitting their reality, it might yet be imagined that miracles supply a kind of evidence suited to immature and uncultured minds, but valueless for ripe, profound, and thoroughly trained intellects. This is not so. They have one signally important intellectual use. They cut sheer across the prejudice apt to root itself most strongly in the most cultivated minds, that the course of nature is unalterable, and springs not from design and choice, but from a certain blind innate necessity. Analogous to those detached volitions by which human beings are most strikingly revealed to one another in speech and action, miracles—especially those in which no human minister is concerned—place us, as nothing else could, in the personal presence of Deity. The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, food brought forth out of the earth,



grass for the cattle and herb for the service of man, are God's witnesses. There is no speech nor language ; without these their voice is heard, But it is from the Burning Bush and from the Open Heaven that the Voice speaks to man : "I AM that I AM ; I AM the LORD thy God."

The Scientific Bias is probably the chief intellectual danger of modern culture. That is to say, the tendency to assume that, since all truth must be harmonious, there is but one species of truth, namely, 'that ascertainable by scientific methods. Were man nothing but pure intellect, miracles would be as superfluous as they would be distressing and unintelligible. But in that case, religion also would be superfluous, or rather impossible ; and several other things likewise. Man is compact of feeling, imagination, will, activity, as well as of pure intellect. He discerns therefore and requires not only truth of science, but truth of feeling, of moral judgment, of action ; and if I ought not to say also of imagination, yet truth which without imagination he would be incapable of knowing. The danger, not of science alone, but of every absorbing and laborious pursuit, is, that in perfecting the mind in a single direction it narrows and blunts it in others. A needle between the fingers shows thicker than a cathedral tower ten miles off. A child's marble at arm's length eclipses the sun. In like manner, a single portion of truth—the principle, for example, of Physical Law—held continually close to the mind's eye, may hide whole realms of thought, which the charter of our nature entitles us to explore. There is a scientific bigotry and fanaticism every whit as narrow, honest, and intolerant, as what is named religious, imprisoning men not with stone walls and iron chains, which bind only

the flesh, but within rigid intellectual forms which bind the soul.

Against this tyranny of scientific method, this despotic veto on man's right to climb and even to soar to regions of truth where science can neither lead nor follow, MIRACLES are a standing protest. They speak to the heart, to the imagination, and to that intuitive reason which we name common sense. They reveal GOD, not as a nebulous Conjecture descried afar from our observatories, nor as an irreducible Element experimentally demonstrated in our laboratories, nor as a sublime Hypothesis requisite to complete our theory of the universe, but as a Living Presence. They flash a sudden glory through the commonest objects, which makes all nature transparent. They show us the Hand upon the helm of the Universe. They remind us that whether there be science it shall vanish away, but the truth on which faith and hope lay hold shall not vanish, but abide, fast moored to Infinite Power and Unchangeable Love.

LECTURE VIII.

*JESUS.*



## LECTURE VIII.

JESUS.

### § I.

TRUST in testimony is the pivot of human affairs. Commonwealths prosper according as legislation, policy, taxation, administration of justice, industry, are regulated by that wise treasuring up of experience, practical acquaintance with contemporary facts, and sagacious foresight, which are based, not on abstract reasoning, but mainly on the testimony of competent and faithful witnesses. The corner-stone of the colossal fabric of modern commerce is trust of another kind—not simple credence of testimony, but mutual faith as to the fulfilment of promises. But the daily conduct of business depends on facts received upon the authority of public journals and private letters. Distrust of testimony would strike the whole course of trade with deadly paralysis. Written testimony, checked and reinforced by the evidence of language, institutions, and monuments, supplies the key to the treasures of wisdom stored in the lessons of the Past. Testimony to character, again, is one of the main safeguards of social life, as trust in personal character is the very cement of society. Personal experience is not seldom contrasted, in current phrase, with reliance on testimony; but if analysed, personal experience will be found largely to consist in

the collecting and sifting of testimony ; nor is any fruit of experience more profitable than sagacity in distinguishing trustworthy testimony from unauthentic.

Science itself, that birth-proud offspring of Experience wedded to Knowledge, is to the majority, and to a large degree even to scientific adepts, an affair of testimony. Some solitary mind breeds and nurses the thought destined to prove the torch-bearer along some unexplored track of knowledge. Some lonely worker patiently conducts and records the laborious train of observations, works out the tedious calculations, invents and performs the series of bold or delicate experiments, of which an unsuspected law, or perhaps a new science, is the hard-won meed. His testimony—perhaps checked, perhaps not, by the observations and experiments of other workers—takes its place among the universally accepted data of science. The time is past for even the most keen and versatile intellect to play the part of an independent inquirer in many distinct branches of science. The wider the field, the more divided becomes the work ; the richer the harvest, the larger the proportion which must be entrusted to the storehouse of recorded testimony.

Justly to estimate the value of testimony as a prime factor in human history, one universal canon must be carefully noted. The graver the matter in question, the smaller will be the number of competent witnesses ; because either higher qualifications or rarer opportunities will be requisite. In a trial for murder, for example, the issue of life or death may hang on the evidence of a single witness. If he be the only witness who could possibly know the facts, the testimony of all the world beside would be irrelevant ; and if he is free from all

suspicion of incapacity, prejudice, or dishonesty, his testimony, if positive, is decisive. The law of Moses, in view of the many infirmities of human testimony, required two accordant witnesses in every capital case; preferring the certainty that the guilty would often escape to the risk of the innocent suffering. Great statesmen, lawyers, surgeons, engineers, merchants, could be named, the single opinion of one of whom in his own department would possess more weight than that of any number of inferior judges. Some half-dozen others may be as good judges as he in dealing with the same class of facts; and if those six or seven men were agreed on some difficult question, it would be settled as certainly as human wisdom could settle it. This is what we mean when we speak of a man as ‘a great authority’ in his own profession or department. His capacities and opportunities of judging so far excel those of other men that his opinion outweighs all theirs put together. He is more likely than they to be right. Authorities are to be weighed, not counted. The vote of the majority is the clumsy expedient unavoidable when the will as well as the interest of the multitude must be consulted; but the idea of deciding any scientific, moral, or historical truth by counting voices would be insanity. Authority is indeed often conceded to the consenting opinion of the many; but this holds only when it is evidently improbable that a multitude of persons can fall into the same error. If the sources of error, or inducements to resist truth, are common to all whose opinion is appealed to, numbers count for nothing. Augustine’s high-sounding maxim,—“*Secure judicat orbis terrarum*”<sup>1</sup>—tells more strongly for Polytheism than for Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> “The judgment of all the world is safe to be right.”

AUTHORITY is thus a very variable quantity. It can be measured by no standard. Whether it be that vague persuasion which lies in the consent of numbers, or that definite and rational probability which attaches to the deliberate judgment of the best judges, its weight may vary from a faint presumption to an irresistible certainty.<sup>1</sup> Each case must be judged on its own merits. Let us, however, clearly understand that in order to estimate the weight of authority in any given case, it is by no means necessary that we should be authorities ourselves. We may be quite competent to judge the judges, and quite incompetent to criticise their judgment. This distinction is of vital moment, for if it were false, practical life must come to a dead-lock. We cannot evade the responsibility of private judgment in selecting the tribunal before which we will lay our cause ; the legal, commercial, medical, or other professional advisers whom we will consult ; the statesman whose party we will join. But having done this, we may show as much wisdom as humility in implicitly accepting an opinion we are not qualified to criticise.

Archbishop Whately, with his usual clear-headed accuracy, has pointed out the ambiguity arising from the employment of the same word—‘authority’—to denote both weight of opinion or testimony, and lawful superiority : the right to be believed, and the right to be obeyed. Especially he has indicated the dire confusion thus affecting the phrase ‘Church authority.’ The opinion of a Church, like that of any other community of men, may carry great authority in regard

<sup>1</sup> “ Authority, in the sense of *Auctoritas*, may have every degree of weight, from absolute infallibility (such as in religious matters Christians attribute to the Scriptures) down to the faintest presumption.”—*Appendix to WHATELY'S Logic*, p. 342, sixth edition.



to matters of fact (such as the genuineness of a document, the antiquity or perpetuity of a custom, the proper interpretation of language), provided the bulk of its members be qualified to form an independent judgment: otherwise, even unanimity carries little weight. But authority in the sense of lawful claim to be obeyed can be possessed by a community as such only in one of three modes. (1) By the voice of the majority. (2) By power delegated from the whole membership to its officers. (3) By power conferred from a source outside itself: as, in the case of municipalities or colonies, from the sovereign state: in the case of sovereign states (if there be any political authority not based on popular consent) from God. The first kind became impossible in the Christian Church as soon as it extended beyond Jerusalem. The second would be most strongly repudiated by the strongest advocates of Church authority. If Church authority exist at all it must be therefore of the third kind,—not delegated from below, but conferred from above; not the authority OF the Church, but authority IN the Church, which can only be that of the Head of the Church. Of this sort was the authority claimed by the Apostles; and if any claim it now they are bound—as the Apostles confessed themselves bound—to make good the claim by appropriate and adequate evidence. In any case, claim to Belief and claim to Obedience must be clearly and rigorously distinguished.

Authority, in the sense of the moral claim of adequate testimony in matters of fact, or in matters of opinion of superior knowledge and sagacity (combined with integrity), to be believed,—*q. d.*, to receive the intelligent assent of our judgment—is thus seen to be a necessity pervading all branches of human knowledge with the

breadth and force of a law. Two kinds of knowledge alone are exempt from its rule: pure deductive reasoning, and those primary intuitions of reason — those inborn certainties — which form the root and base of thought.<sup>1</sup> The authority of all the geometers in the world cannot add to the certainty of the equality of the sum of the angles of every triangle with two right angles. No one can be said to know this truth with the kind of certainty suited to it who has not intelligently apprehended the chain of reasoning by which it is demonstrated; and he who has done so possesses a rational certainty which cannot be surpassed, and which the incredulity of millions unable to see the force of the proof ought not to disturb. So, again, those fundamental intuitions on which are based our ideas of Self, of Others, of Will, Force, Space, Time, Right, Wrong, and other elementary conceptions, can neither have their certainty shaken by all the debates of philosophers nor increased by any form of reasoning or weight of authority. In like manner, neither reasoning nor authority can affect the evidence of the fundamental laws of reasoning; *e.g.*, that of two contradictory propositions one must be true and the other false. These two sources of Knowledge, therefore—pure deduction and rational intuition—lie outside the domain of Authority. All the facts, general or particular, on which the inductions of human knowledge are built, excepting only those of personal consciousness, are matter of testimony, and therefore fall within the province of Authority.

<sup>1</sup> “Λέγω δ’ ἀρχὰς . . . ταύτας ἄς ὅτι ἐστὶ, μὴ ἰνδέχεται δεῖξαι.”—*Anal. Post.* i. 10. Cf. ii. 15.

## § II.

The bearing of the conclusions thus established upon our main argument is alike direct and momentous. If God exists, and if the knowledge of God is possible to man, it would be a moral absurdity to suppose this knowledge an exception to the universal law of the authority of testimony. The reasons have been considered at an earlier stage of our inquiry which forbid us to assign either *a priori* reasoning or primary intuition as the basis of religious faith. As to the former, pure deductive reasoning can establish the existence of no Reality which is not implied in the first truths from which the reasoning starts. As to the latter, although a large part of human experience becomes unintelligible if we deny the possibility of a direct intuition of God, yet it cannot be pretended that such experience is common. In the mass of mankind, such intuitive knowledge, if not absolutely lacking, is at all events so obscure as to furnish no ground of strong conviction, much less of certainty.

If, then, there have been minds possessing the intuitive sense of God with such strength and clearness as to constitute unclouded certainty, they are exceptions to the ordinary pattern of humanity. If such exceptional character can be established as a fact—whether resulting from an original spiritual faculty, lacking in other men, or from extraordinary Divine manifestations evoking in them a faculty which in others lies dormant; it must invest their testimony with unique value. It constitutes them authorities concerning Religious Truth.

The germinant points from which human history has branched off in new directions with fresh vigour and

fruitfulness have been individual minds, whose rare endowments proclaimed their vocation to lead, not follow, their fellow-men. National history, and even universal history, may at any moment receive a totally new impulse and inspiration, in politics, war, science, philosophy, art, commerce, morals, through the appearance of some splendidly-gifted mind.<sup>1</sup> If the same thing has occurred in Religion, this is what the whole analogy of human life leads us to expect. There is no *a priori* presumption against the belief that there have been authorities in Religion,—men whose spiritual stature, far out-topping the common level of the race, enabled them to see what others cannot; or even that there has been a Single Teacher, either endowed with such transcendent spiritual insight and sensibility, or distinguished by such direct communications from the Source of wisdom and life, that all the world may reasonably be invited to sit in reverent discipleship at his feet.

No question touches more closely the basis of faith than the question whether there have in fact been such teachers, or such a Supreme Teacher. When we have explained as best we may the evidence which the Universe can furnish of the existence and character of God, and have gazed silent and appalled on its mysteries, can we turn for guidance to any mind so much wiser, stronger, and better than our own, that we may repose in its judgment as infallible? Through the turmoil of conflicting voices and the tempest of doubt can we hear, calm and clear above the windy strife, a Voice that

<sup>1</sup> Hence there can never be any true Science of History or 'Sociology,' because although we may discover what may in a sense be termed 'laws' of human development,—causes, that is, which work with some approach to regularity; yet this principal factor is altogether incalculable, and never repeated.

we can trust, saying,—“ I KNOW HIM, AND HAVE SEEN HIM ” ?

We have seen <sup>1</sup> that the central element in the idea of Revelation pervading the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is the actual existence of a series of such exceptionally endowed or inspired minds : Seers, whose eyes were opened to behold the vision of the Almighty ; Men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; Prophets, to whom God spoke, and who spoke for God to men. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, John the Baptist, are the most illustrious examples of a succession of men irregularly dispersed through many centuries, who claimed, and were believed by their contemporaries, to converse with God as really, directly, and consciously as with their fellow-men. The importance of this claim, if valid, alike to human welfare and to true philosophy, cannot be exaggerated. A genuinely philosophical scepticism would recognise the necessity of honestly testing and satisfactorily explaining these claims, considered in each separate case, in their mutual relations, and in the yet more remarkable relation of the body of Old Testament prophecy to the writers of the New Testament. A scepticism which superficially contents itself with casting doubt upon the documents, or lightly affirming that the intuitions or revelations of these great teachers were mere subjective illusions, has no right to call itself philosophical. For if the documents do not contain thoughts of a quality and level sublimely above those of human genius in its ordinary flights, their date and genuineness matter little ; but if they do, no doubts as to authorship, chronology, or accuracy of historic detail affect the problem of their origin.

<sup>1</sup> See Lecture vii.

Scepticism, unhappily, is in itself a serious disqualification for judging of the evidence. For by what faculties shall we be empowered to criticise the intuitions or revelations of those who claim to possess a spiritual vision lifting them above the point of view of ordinary minds? We must ourselves possess some measure of the same faculty. That is visible which the eye is able to see. That is audible which the ear is able to hear. Libraries of argument are as powerless as centuries of legislation and persecution to alter the fact that the first condition of what any man can know or believe is what the man himself IS. As the great poet, painter, or musician can be intelligently criticised, and his genius—what we call his inspiration—recognised only by those in some degree endowed with poetic, pictorial, or musical sensibility and insight; so it is not merely the unanimous doctrine of all great spiritual teachers, but the verdict of common sense, that spiritual teaching can be criticised only by such as possess spiritual insight; Divine teaching appreciated only by those who are themselves “taught of God.”

“Then you surrender the whole position,” the Sceptic may exclaim. “By setting up purely subjective limits you concede that the knowledge of Deity is not within the province of Science; that is, it is not valid knowledge at all.” The concession, such as it is, is easily made, though it must be remarked in passing that Science also has its purely subjective conditions. It is not granted to every one to become a Davy or a Herschel, a Faraday or a Tyndal. Even to receive the teaching of these leaders of science requires a certain mental aptitude, as well as culture, not universally enjoyed. But, in fact, this concession—made not for the

first time here, but implied throughout our inquiry—is no concession at all. No fallacy can be more transparent than the assumption that Science is coextensive with valid Knowledge. For on what is Science based? You cannot support a building by hanging the foundation-stones to the rafters. Science cannot rest on science. It rests on the data supplied by outward nature and human nature; not separately, but in conjunction: the sum total of authentically recorded experience. Science is knowledge systematised by wide generalisation and rigorous deduction. It is therefore far from being capable of absorbing the whole treasure of this experience; for a vast proportion of the facts of human nature and history refuse to repeat themselves, or, if recurring, resist the attempt to reduce them under uniform laws. The provinces of History and Science, largely as they overlap, can never coincide.

To resume. For our present inquiry there is happily no need to traverse the immense field included in the broad question of Authority in reference to religious truth. Practically, our conclusion hangs on our judgment of the claims of One Teacher. Sharply outlined against the deep background of the Past, rising in serene unapproached grandeur above its heroic figures and colossal phantoms, undimmed by the mists of intervening ages, One Form withdraws our gaze from all others. One Voice, clear in our ears as in the ears of the men of Galilee eighteen hundred years ago, still speaks as no other voice ever spoke to the heart of universal humanity. One Name, in its regal power over men's minds and hearts, continues, and promises to continue, as during sixty generations, 'above every name.' Some half-dozen names — Confucius, Gautama, Pythagoras,

Socrates, Zoroaster, Mohammed—may for a moment present themselves as rivalling the name of JESUS in their dominion over the faith of mankind. But an inspection of their dogmas and institutions, and of their influence on their disciples, will dissipate this illusion. The comparison, full of profound interest and instruction, is beside our present inquiry. The certainty that we may have valid knowledge of God and hold real personal communion with Him, not merely as Creator and Foundation of the Universe, but as Father of spirits, Hearer of prayer, and Guide of trusting souls, must stand or fall with the authority of JESUS CHRIST.

This assertion, though it may be hotly challenged, is not open, I apprehend, to serious refutation. Judaism and Mohammedism will be pointed to as refuting it. But Mohammedism is merely a mutilated Judaism, obscured with an enormous mass of fable, but with the important addition of a most explicit acknowledgment of the authority of Jesus, as a prophet, apostle, or messenger of God.<sup>1</sup> And Judaism, essentially national, unintelligible apart from the history of a single nation, and never designed to be transported from its native soil and naturalised among other nations, affords, *apart from Christianity as its complement*, no basis of personal faith to any but Jews. The teaching of Jesus, embodying the entire religious doctrine of Judaism, stripped it of everything local and national, and breathed into it that universal spirit which rendered possible a religion for the whole Human Race. At the same time it made provision, in a way undreamed of before, and never attempted by any other system, for personal faith in God and communion with Him.

<sup>1</sup> See the references under the name 'Jesus Christ,' in the Index to SALE'S *Koran*.



A man may be a Theist who is in no sense a Christian, any more than he is a Jew or a Mussulman. But he must be so on his own responsibility, not on authority,—which is the point we are considering. His creed must have a subjective basis; buttressed perhaps by the vague authority of general consent. It will be difficult to fence in securely on the side of Pantheism. It will scarcely warrant prayer; certainly not that intimate filial converse with God which Christianity declares possible and enjoins. Wherever a creed closely resembling that of Christian Theism is held, Christianity being avowedly rejected, it is probable that the ideas of Jesus exert a profound and decisive though unacknowledged influence.

The antagonists of what is termed (by a vague and unphilosophical, but sufficiently intelligible, phrase) “Supernatural Religion” are fully awake to the necessity of overturning the authority of Jesus as the first condition of victory. In order to this, the Four Gospels must first be got rid of; for while these remain, the voice of Jesus will continue to exercise over a vast multitude (including not a few of the wisest and most cultured) of human minds all the power of a living Teacher. In their estimate, the negative arguments of Atheism, Pantheism, and Agnosticism will continue to be discredited by the positive testimony of the greatest of Teachers to the existence, character, and conversableness of God. Even supposing the conclusions of the (so-called) ‘most advanced’ criticism established, and the Gospels, together with their continuation in the Acts, assigned to the latest date any critic has ventured to suggest, it would still be open to us to conclude from internal evidence that the tradition they hand down to us of the teaching of Jesus

is substantially trustworthy.<sup>1</sup> And there would still remain the totally independent witness of St. Paul's writings, and of those ascribed to St. John, St. James, and St. Peter.

Detailed historical or literary criticism lies altogether out of the range of our present inquiry. But there are certain broad and solid grounds on which, as it seems to me, apart from such criticism, the intelligent inquirer may rest satisfied that we possess in the Four Gospels substantially authentic accounts of the teaching and life of Christ. Certain facts may be set down as matter of historic certainty which cannot rationally be disputed. Among these, I apprehend, are the following :—

I. That the Christian religion was founded by JESUS, who was crucified in or about the year 30, by Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judæa.

II. That his doctrines, with the narrative of his life, death, and reported resurrection, were preached, first in Jerusalem and Palestine, afterwards throughout the Empire and far beyond its eastern frontier, by his per-

<sup>1</sup> The *internal evidence* of the truth and genuineness of the Gospels (as also of the inspiration or superhuman authorship of the Scriptures generally) is sometimes most unscientifically slighted on the ground that its force is merely subjective, *q.d.*, that it requires special sensibility and culture to appreciate it. It seems to be overlooked that this is precisely because it is the highest kind of evidence. The highest points of every art and science are those which demand special attainments for their due appreciation. If it be required to distinguish a painting by Raphael from a third-rate copy, or a sonata of Beethoven from the patchwork of a dull plagiarist, the point really in question is the ability of the judge. It seems to be imagined by many that the genuineness of the Gospels in some way depends on the *dictum* of modern critics; whereas, if the Gospels are in fact genuine, it is the critics who are on trial. Eventually it will, I believe, be acknowledged, that to be able to doubt the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel, for example, indicates a defective faculty for the higher criticism. But at this point (as in disputed matters of taste, or of morality) argument stops. Every man must either judge for himself or accept the opinion of those he accounts the best judges.

sonal disciples and their companions or converts. In no other way could his religion have spread as it did.

III. That within some ten years from the death of Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, a Jewish rabbi of rare ability and energy, became a convert to Christianity, and thenceforth its foremost and most successful missionary.

IV. That little more than thirty years after the death of Jesus (A.D. 64) Christians had become very numerous in Rome, as is proved by the persecution inflicted on them by Nero, and his attempt to cast on them the odium of the burning of the city.

V. That in the first decade of the second century, about eighty years after the crucifixion, Christians were so numerous in Bithynia that Pliny, the Roman governor (an authority above suspicion), in his famous letter to Trajan, describes the temples as deserted and the worship of the gods as well-nigh extinct.

VI. That Rome and Bithynia were not exceptional cases, but examples of what had been going on in Asia, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, and North Africa, including the great cities of Alexandria and Carthage. Christian communities, termed 'churches,' were thus, in the early years of the second century, thickly sown throughout the civilised world.

VII. That this multitude of widely-distributed churches, though afterwards combined into a vast organic whole under a powerful hierarchy, possessed at that early date no unity but the moral unity of common beliefs, sentiments, and customs, based on their common recognition of the supreme authority of Christ and his apostles. By virtue of these they formed a world-wide spiritual brotherhood, else impossible.

By the side of these indubitable facts we have to

place two other facts : first, that at some time during the first two centuries these four gospels—these and no others — did actually obtain universal circulation and credence through that vast body of Christian churches ; secondly, that the testimony of St. Paul, whose ministry certainly closed before A.D. 70, in all substantial points confirms their narrative. When, therefore, we are asked to believe that they are productions belonging to the latter half of the second century, — three of them unauthentic compilations, and the fourth a highly elaborate forgery,—the following dilemma presents itself : These four works, when (without concert, but with an incredible conjunction of daring and good fortune) their unknown authors had in some inconceivable manner managed to launch them into general circulation, either contained the universally received account of the life and doctrines of JESUS, or they did not. If they did NOT, how were the Christian churches through Europe, Asia, and Africa persuaded to think that they did, and forthwith to fling aside precious and authentic documents previously received, and to enshrine these novel impostures in their churches, their homes, and their memories, as sacred treasures ? But if they DID ; then, if the Gospels themselves are not contemporary with the apostolic age, their contents are. They contain what the first Christian preachers taught and the first Christian converts and churches believed. The common belief of the Christian church—that is, of the innumerable churches thickly planted over that wide area—proves a common origin. Universal belief does not of itself prove the truth of the thing believed. But it is an effect which must have a cause. And when no cause is possible except the truth of the facts believed, it becomes irrefragable evidence, because it is a kind of

evidence that cannot be suborned. This is not a case of conflicting testimony. There is absolutely *no contradictory evidence*. This fact is totally inexplicable, except on the supposition of the truth of the Gospels. The earliest witnesses, including the Apostle Paul, must all have told the same story. For how would it have been possible, three or four generations later, to have compacted inconsistent legends and doctrines into a single world-wide faith? And this implies the truth of that story. It is perfectly irreconcilable with all our experience of human nature that 'those who were scattered abroad everywhere, preaching the Word,' should have agreed in their testimony had that testimony not been substantially true.

Questions of the reputed authorship of books, and of their minute accuracy in historic details, important as they are in other points of view, may therefore as regards our present inquiry be patiently left to the decision of honest and competent scholarship; and any scholarship which is either not honest or not competent, to the verdict of time. On the ground, not of microscopic research among the dark corners and dusty relics of antiquity, but of plain broad facts, we are, I submit, warranted and even compelled to conclude that the New Testament records bring us face to face with the teaching, life, and personality of the only Teacher who can pretend to impart to the whole human race the knowledge of God; and who expressly claims to have placed this knowledge, by his authoritative testimony, on a basis of certainty warranting undoubting faith.

Before attempting to answer the question—"What is the Testimony of Jesus concerning God?"—it is proper to indicate two far more subtil kinds of evidence which

must be taken account of in estimating his authority, in addition to the broad historic evidence already summed up. Their force will vary from zero to certainty, according to the temper and endowments of the mind contemplating them. The first kind is the internal evidence presented by those traits of portraiture and narration which incline or compel us to believe that the Evangelists are recording facts. Such, for instance, are the combination, in the character of Jesus, of uniqueness with naturalness ; and of superhuman force and majesty with unequalled gentleness, patience, tenderness, and humility ; the occurrence of graphic details which a forger would not have invented, or in which he would have surely betrayed himself ; the breadth, grandeur, freshness, contrast with current ideas, spiritual depth and purity, which render it absurd to suppose that the doctrine of Jesus, instead of forming the minds of his disciples, was invented by them. Such, in a word, are all those features of the Gospels which transcend the power of human genius to have produced as fiction, combined with all those bearing the stamp—hard to counterfeit—of reality and truth. To all this must be added the union of solid agreement with minor divergences and distinctive individual character.<sup>1</sup>

To minds capable of appreciating it, this kind of evidence shines by its own light. They perceive that to suppose the character of JESUS a fiction evolved in

<sup>1</sup> All these points of evidence bear powerfully on the question, with which we are not here encumbering our argument, of the date and authorship of the Gospels. When adequately studied and appreciated, I believe they will be found to render the theory of spurious and late origin simply ridiculous. But there is no royal road along which evidence of this kind can be conveyed wholesale from one mind to another. We must reap it with our own sickle.

the imagination of his professed followers, and his recorded doctrines a confused compilation of half-remembered fragments of his actual sayings mixed with the speculations and fancies of a later age, is to suppose a miracle more marvellous and far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels—because destitute of adequate cause, and at variance with the laws of human nature.<sup>1</sup>

The other and yet higher kind of evidence is that presented to a mind which finds itself brought by the teaching of Jesus face to face with TRUTH irresistibly commanding its assent, whereby it is at once humbled and exalted, calmed and chastened, overmastered and inspired; which makes life transparent with Divine meaning, ennobles it with sublime purpose, sweetens and brightens it with peace that fails not and joy that grows not old, and crowns it with the glory of immortal hope. Such a mind reposes in a certainty which logic can neither confirm nor shake; and understands what the men of Sychar felt when they said to her who had led them into the presence of Jesus, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

To this intuitive certainty the teaching of Jesus always pointed as the essence of true discipleship. He spoke as possessing the knowledge of God in clear certainty and fulness, and as able to impart it. But He taught that in order to its reception one must have a personal aptitude and a Divine illumination. Like seed

<sup>1</sup> See, in illustration of this branch of evidence, the masterly remarks in the *Superhuman Origin of the Bible*, Lect. vi. pp. 238, 239 (8vo edition); and compare the eloquent passage (one of the finest in the English language) in the *Defence of the Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 141-144.

sown on different soils, his teaching will take root and bear fruit, or wither and be wasted, according to the character of the hearer. He that hath ears will hear. To him that hath shall more be given. Those who do the will of God shall know that the doctrine is of God—no mere opinion or invention, but a Divine message. They shall be all taught of God. They shall walk in the light and know the truth. What flesh and blood can not reveal shall be revealed to them by their Father in heaven. Wisdom hid from the pride of human learning and genius shall be made plain to those who bring to it the open-hearted docility of childhood. The penitent Publican enters the kingdom on whose border the scornful Pharisee stands self-excluded. The pure in heart shall see God.

The two great expositors of Christ's teaching—St. Paul and St. John—are perfectly at one regarding this fundamental tenet of their Master's doctrine. They teach, as positively as the Gospels represent Christ to have taught, that love is at once the sum of law, the crown of virtue, and the supreme height of knowledge. Knowledge without love is worthless, because partial and transient; love is eternal. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love." This perfect agreement of two minds of such commanding power, so emphatically distinct in mould and habit, proves beyond doubt that they drew from a common source.

It is thus indubitably certain that a fundamental tenet in the teaching of Christ is the necessity of a moral or spiritual basis—in other words, a personal basis—for faith in God, and for the highest kind of knowledge.



The importance of grasping this fact firmly and intelligently cannot be overstated ; because if this doctrine be false, the whole system of Christianity falls to pieces. If the testimony of Jesus is accepted, it must be on his own terms. It admits not of selection and excision. Particular truths included in it may, of course, be held on independent grounds ; but that is quite different from accepting his authority. An honest student may indeed suspend his assent to any segment of the circle until he has endeavoured to trace its circumference and penetrate to its centre. But he will find that the doctrine and the personal claims of Jesus form an organic whole, like a living body, in which the attempt to dissect out the skeleton from the muscles, or the nerves from the arteries, is death. No view of the relation of his teaching to personal belief, or of its place in the history of our Race, can be intelligent—much less philosophical—which neglects profoundly to study this fundamental principle ; namely, that a Divine illumination and a spiritual intuition are the *sine quâ non* of the highest knowledge.

This doctrine is not at variance, but in perfect harmony, with the logical conclusions of Natural Theology ; that is, the doctrine of God gathered from the witness of universal nature and of human nature. For knowledge, wisdom, will, goodness, righteousness, sovereign authority, are attributes of personality. The Being who possesses these, whatever his infinite nature may include which the word 'Person' cannot stand for, must be known by us, if He come at all within the range of our knowledge, as personal. Only as a Person—a Spirit, of whom our spirits are miniature likenesses—can we trust in his wisdom and wisely-directed power, love Him for his

goodness, obey his will, and aspire to his love and to his image. It follows, by an analogy which is here our sole light, and to reject which is to give the lie to reason, that our knowledge of God, like our knowledge of our fellow-men, to be real and valid, must be of the heart as well as of the intellect ; the knowledge of sympathy, trust, and love.

### § III.

We are now prepared to deal with the question :—*Who is Jesus, and what is his testimony concerning God?* The reply given to the first half of this question by those who knew Him best was, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The name by which He loved to speak of Himself was “the Son of man.” But his disciples commonly spoke of Him as the “Master” or “Teacher.” And whatsoever higher faith we may cherish or aspire after, it is in this character that we must first of all regard Him ;—the character in which his earliest disciples at first received Him, as a Teacher sent from God to reveal God to men. The acceptance of his word (as in the Hebrew phrase He termed his teaching) was his primary requirement from all comers : not the reception of any sharply-defined doctrine, but implicit submission to his instruction as the infallible oracle of religious truth, and to his commands as the canon of life. Faith and love, love and obedience, obedience and knowledge, are so inwoven in the doctrine and method of Jesus, that none is considered capable of existing apart from the others. Those who will learn of Him must follow Him, even at the cost of forsaking all beside. Those who follow Him shall not walk in dark-

ness, but have the light of life. They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

On any theory of his person and character, Jesus stands alone among men; alone in his relation to his own age, and to all preceding and following ages; alone in his depth and breadth of human tenderness and sympathy, as much as in the peerless grandeur of his moral and spiritual nature. Nothing in the age in which He appeared, or in foregoing ages, accounts for Him; and the after times have been moulded by Him. His life rises sheer from the dead level of common humanity, like some mountain peak rising from the bosom of ocean girdled with perpetual summer and crowned with eternal snow. The age was one not of development but of decline. Liberty was dead. Faith was dying. Morals were sick unto death. Society had sunk to that degraded level when imperial despotism is welcomed as a refuge from insane anarchy, when patriotism has no longer any vocation, and when philosophy is shut up to the fatal choice between a godless sensualism, a heartless scepticism, and a noble despair. In the land of Samuel and David, Elijah and Isaiah, the mountain-fortress of monotheistic faith, corruption of morals and contempt for human life, had reached that pitch which foretells national dissolution. Religion was rent in twain between the ethical secularism of the Sadducee and the fantastic ritualism of the Pharisee. The Rabbi stood in the Prophet's empty place. Faithful hearts mourned and wondered as the prospect grew ever darker, and false prophets and mock saviours seemed to render more hopeless the advent of any true prophet to arouse the slumbering church, or reformer to pilot the foundering state. The degradation

of Israel could not be more vividly epigrammatised than in two facts:—the sword of Rome had placed on the throne of David and Solomon an Edomite tyrant, who parcelled out the reversion of his kingdom to such of his sons as he had not murdered; and by the hands of Herod, dripping with the blood of wholesale and unnatural murders, the Temple of Jehovah had been rebuilt with a magnificence that cast the glory of Solomon's Temple into the shade. The high priests who ministered in its Holy of Holies were made and unmade by Roman Emperors; and the sword of authority took turns with the dagger of the assassin in drenching its pavements with the blood of its worshippers. The picture drawn by the great Jewish historian of the state of affairs when the Jews petitioned that Judæa might be reduced to a Roman province, shows us a nation in the agonies of dissolution. The horizon of the heathen world disclosed no dawn of hope. The East had long ceased to illumine the West with its antique wisdom. In the three great centres of Western thought—Rome, Athens, Alexandria, not even a star rose in the darkening sky. Human nature seemed to have exhausted its resources. The sentiment of Pliny (a generation later) that “the greatest gift God has bestowed on man is the power of suicide”<sup>1</sup> expresses the wail of that moral despair which had settled down on the finest spirits, as they surveyed society, and vainly questioned their own mind and the universe.

It was from the midst of this pestilential morass of national, social, and intellectual decay, that there suddenly welled forth the living fountain of a universal religion

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by NEANDER, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 14. *Bohn's Translation.*

and morality,—the head stream of a movement which has flowed on with undecaying force through eighteen centuries, and whose waves are breaking to-day on the shores of Japan and in the central wilds of Africa. That movement bestowed on the world three imperishable ideas:—UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD, based on a common redemption from sin, binding together the king and the slave in a common gratitude, hope, loyalty, and work; LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, based on the equal relation of all human beings to God; and UNALTERABLE MORALITY, based on love to God. Under the solvent power of these ideas, with their companion motives, the ethical, social, political, and philosophical thought of the Ancient World melted and ran into new forms. They are the most animating ideas of the Present. From them are borrowed those three sonorous watchwords of the Future—“*Fraternity, Liberty, Equality.*” Apart from these ideas of Jesus, vainly do the conflicting voices of the leaders of thought strive to utter that great word without which the others are but empty echoes—Righteousness.

Yet it would show profound ignorance to ascribe to these sublime ideas the power of Jesus over men’s minds and hearts, or the wide and rapid triumph of his Gospel. The Jewish people were not a nation of philosophers. The first missionaries of the Cross were not men likely to be enthusiasts about abstract ideas. Ideas rule the world in the long run,—but only in the long run. They must be embodied in persons, parties, practical objects, watchwords, and symbols, and thus appeal to the imagination and the heart, if they are to impel men to the battle-field, to martyrdom, or to life-long self-sacrifice and missionary devotion. The secret of the power wielded by Jesus, lay not in his ideas, any more than in his

miracles : it lay in Himself. He drew men to Him. His spell was not woven by the magic of circumstances. It owed nothing to the charm of association. He drew his descent, it is true, from the ancient royal line of Judah. But a claim that had lain in abeyance for six centuries, and whose living representative was a carpenter of Nazareth, was not likely to arouse much enthusiasm. The patriots at whose names every Jewish breast thrilled, because for a short season they had rekindled the ancient glories of their country, and raised her liberties from the dust, were children, not of Judah, but of Levi. Jesus had been bred as a working man among uncouth rustic neighbours in a country town of Galilee. From that deep obscurity, with no collegiate training, no rabbinical ordination, no *prestige* of station, connection, or achievement, He suddenly emerged heralded during a few months by the trumpet-voice of John's preaching. At the mature age of thirty, when most men destined to fame have already given tokens of their greatness, He was unknown beyond the narrow circle of neighbours and kindred, and known among them only as "Jesus the carpenter, the son of Mary." At a single step He stood forth the central Figure among his countrymen. The voice which had been wont on Sabbath days quietly to take turn in reading the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue of Nazareth, reverberated from Dan to Beersheba as the voice of a new lawgiver; a prophet whose very forerunner was greater than the prophets of yore. From month to month, from year to year, his fame rolled in widening circles; growing crowds attended his steps; and the chasm opened wider between the devotion of his friends and the murderous hatred of his foes.

From the first day of his public ministry Jesus has filled and fills a daily growing space in the thoughts, affections, and fortunes of men. His doctrine is as fiercely assailed to-day—with the same enmity and very much the same weapons—as by Celsus and Porphyry, and with as eager a hope of exterminating it as inspired Diocletian and Julian. The footsteps of the men who for Christ's sake have left home, friends, and fortune, lead the march of freedom and civilisation into the hunting grounds of slavery and the perilous haunts of cannibalism. Thousands who cannot speak one another's language, and have no bond of sympathy but their love to Him, are ready to die for the sake of Jesus. Personal love to Him is as living a force to-day as when He walked by the Sea of Galilee, and, at his simple "Follow me," the hardy fishermen forsook their nets and boats and followed Him.

As the Secret of Jesus lay in Himself—in what men saw and believed Him to be—so his Method was personal. He announced Himself as the founder not of a Religion alone, but of a Kingdom, citizenship in which is by voluntary enrolment. He addressed Himself neither to the select leaders of thought or of affairs, nor to popular assemblies. He moved the multitude neither indirectly through the few, nor directly in mass, but by their individual units. He took pains to shake Himself free from the encumbrance of a loose following, and offended the shallow by hard sayings and the half-hearted by hard conditions. But those who were willing to "take his yoke upon them," and to accept Him on his own terms, He bound to Himself, body and soul, with ties that neither life nor death could rend; and grudged no time or toil in unfolding to them the loftiest

and deepest mysteries of truth. To a kingly bearing, which made it the natural thing for men to fall at his feet, and a scorn of hypocrisy and indignation against unrighteousness which could scathe like thunderbolts, He joined a winning tenderness so irresistible that little children ran into his arms at his call, or gathered singing around Him ; and wretched outcasts, scorned by the pious and respectable as the wreck and offal of society, clung weeping to Him with sure instinct as their only friend. His followers, on their part, yielded to Him a faith which ripened by degrees into the fervour of an enthusiastic loyalty. The more intimate their converse with Him, the more exalted became their ideas of Him. They began by receiving Him as the promised Messiah of Israel. They ended by regarding Him as the manifested Life, the incarnate Word of God, who was from eternity with the Father, the visible image of invisible Deity. "We beheld," said they, "his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

This personal ascendancy of Jesus over his disciples reached its zenith (from which it has never declined) after his personal presence was withdrawn. Nothing can be more surprising than the contrast between his disciples during their Master's lifetime, or immediately after his death, and the same men seven weeks later, and thenceforth to the end of life. Ordinary principles of human nature fail to explain this contrast. Their own explanation is that the crucified Jesus still lived for them ; that He had risen from the tomb, and ascended to a higher life ; and that from Him, in accordance with his promise, they received a strength and wisdom not their own, an inspiration which lifted them above themselves



and made them new men. They faithfully reproduced his method. They preached not a creed or a ritual, but a kingdom; and the King as the life and soul thereof. They "preached Jesus." The writings and speeches of the greatest of Christian missionaries, though he had never seen Jesus on earth, overflow with illustrations of this fact. The keynote of the Apostle Paul's whole teaching is expressed in his own epigrammatic phrase, "I live no longer, but Christ lives in me." Jesus, the night before his death, had said, "Without me ye can do nothing." Paul, more than thirty years after, responds, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Yet if there be one feature of the character of Jesus clearly set forth in the pages of the Evangelists, on which Paul lays emphatic stress, and by which Jesus stands apart from all other men, it is his perfect abnegation of self. "Even Christ pleased not Himself." Towards men, believers or unbelievers, his attitude was that of absolute authority: towards God it was that of absolute obedience. He declared that He came not to do his own will, but the will of God; that He spoke nothing of Himself, but only what God commanded Him to speak; that his miracles were wrought by the Father dwelling in Him; that his mission in the world was to bear witness to truth, to reveal God, to manifest the Father to his wandering children. The purpose of his coming was to give eternal life to men; and "this," said He, "is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

The moral beauty of the character of Jesus is one of those perfect ideals on which no writ of criticism can be served; which no human judgment is qualified to arraign,

but which summon criticism before their tribunal and fix the standard of human excellence. Yet it is as natural and lifelike as it is ideally perfect. Its symmetry, grace, and ease conceal from us its colossal proportions. Saints, heroes, sages, the lights of human history, occupy each his several department of greatness. None of them is great all round. We are not surprised to find the loftiest wisdom unsympathetic and impatient of conceited ignorance; the most spotless purity cold and ascetic; the most ardent love partial and jealous; the most tender-hearted benevolence deficient in righteous indignation, the purest zeal in tolerance, the deepest humility in nobleness. But in Jesus we can find no exaggeration, no deficiency. He claims to be sole treasure-keeper of the knowledge of God, alone able to impart it. Yet He speaks so simply that children love and learn the stories which the common people heard gladly. He is sinless, yet the Friend of publicans and sinners. The zeal of God's house consumes Him; yet He stands up for the children whom the priests condemn for profaning the Temple with their shouts and songs. He spreads a meal for thousands, yet will have the fragments gathered up. He spends nights in prayer, and has not where to lay his head, yet He eats and drinks like any other guest at the rich man's feast, and approves when a year's wages of a day-labourer are poured in a moment upon his feet. His rebukes of vice and hypocrisy are like two-edged swords, his rules of duty inexorably severe, his standard of righteousness nothing short of likeness to God; yet He breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the faint glow of the dying lamp, but declares the sins of a lifetime pardoned in a moment, promises to the wandering child a Father's

welcome home, and invites the heart worn with toil and care, or heavy-laden with guilt and sorrow, to find rest in his sympathy, grace, and love. In the supreme hour of self-sacrifice, with the cup of an anguish none else could taste at his lips, He is yet so far from being absorbed in the greatness or the agony of that inconceivable conflict, that He can provide a home for his broken-hearted mother, and assure the dying brigand at his side of pardon and paradise. No virtue in Him blazes into excess, any more than it grows dim with defect. He seems almost as unlike good men in his goodness as He is unlike bad men in his sinlessness. Yet that which probably impresses our hearts most in the portrait drawn by the four Evangelists is not his blameless perfection and remoteness from all human frailty, but his sympathy, accessibleness, tenderness, and intense humanity. His own similitude, which has sunk ineffaceably into the heart of mankind, best represents Him: the Good Shepherd carrying the sick lamb in his arms, bearing home the lost sheep on his shoulders, and laying down his life for the flock.

Whence could this portrait have been painted but from the life? How could four separate mirrors reflect the same image but from reality? We owe this matchless portraiture not to a single hand, the marvel of his age and glory of his country's literature, but to two uncultured Galileans—an accountant and a fisherman—and to two companions of the Apostles, who have left no trace of their presence in the world except three small books, which together would make one thin octavo volume. In one only of the four—the fisherman—can we discern any trace of genius or literary art; unless, indeed, it be that highest skill of the artist, to sink his

own individuality and hide himself behind his theme.<sup>1</sup> If it be supposed that in the Four Gospels we have no original testimony of eye-witnesses, but the gathering up at second and third hand of floating traditions concerning Jesus, the marvel is not lessened, but, if possible, increased. To suppose, in fine, that Jesus did not mould and inspire his disciples, but that his disciples created Him—as we know Him in their writings—is to suppose that the fountain that leaps a hundred feet into the sunshine has itself filled the reservoir high up among the hills from which it was fed.

But if the character of Jesus in the Gospels, with the glorified reproduction of it in the Acts and the Epistles, be indeed faithfully copied from life; if the reports of his teaching and the records of his deeds reflect the living Christ; is it possible rationally to explain either his doctrine or his person apart from a Supernatural Force—a supreme spiritual power above, behind, or within humanity? Can the teaching of Jesus be resolved into the opinions—true or false, as may happen—of a man gifted with a highly exalted spiritual or moral sensibility? Can the person of Jesus be accounted for on the supposition that He was but like other great men, or even that He was the greatest of men? Innumerable have been the attempts to solve this problem. Their number and inconsistency proclaim their failure. Like the Philistine host, they ‘go on beating down one another.’ They all agree, however, in starting with one foregone conclusion, namely, that the miraculous is the impossible. Any narrative, therefore, involving a miraculous element, must be one of two,—pure fiction, or an incrustation of fiction on a nucleus of fact. But the

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Superhuman Origin of the Bible*, p. 242.

story of Jesus stubbornly resists every method by which the fictitious element might be evaporated and the pure crystals of truth deposited, or the golden grains of fact washed out from the *débris* of legend, myth, and allegory. It is like the garment which even the rough hands of the Roman soldiers forbore to rend—"without seam, woven from the top throughout." The miracles of Jesus cannot be stripped away from the narrative as later accretions, leaving the image of his life and teaching intact; nor do they resemble a dazzling halo, freed from which his figure stands before us in clear daylight. They entwine themselves with the entire thread of his history, weave themselves into his teaching, and form the critical turning-points in that feud between Him and the Jewish rulers which brought Him to the cross. They become Him so naturally, that their absence would seem even more wonderful than their presence. They appear the spontaneous outflow of an inborn power, bridled oftentimes by a wise and dignified self-restraint, but always unlocked by the touch of pity and at the cry of need. Their highest glory lies not in their various and limitless control of physical nature, but in their moral character. The summary of them is that 'he went about doing good.' And in the midst of them all Jesus Himself continues the greatest miracle.<sup>1</sup>

Above all the rest, the crowning miracle of the Resurrection is vital to the story of Jesus, which without it sinks into ruin and absurdity. Essential to the credit of

<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to recapitulate what has been said in Lecture vii, concerning the credibility of miracles. I may here assume as proved what I there endeavoured to show,—that the modern prejudice against miracles is unreasonable, and the arguments adduced to prove them incredible, fallacious. The only question, therefore, respecting the miracles of the Gospel history is whether the evidence of their actual occurrence is as trustworthy as the testimony is clear and positive.

his predictions and promises, it was the imperative condition of the survival of his religion, his church, his kingdom. Unless scepticism can fairly dispose of this central miracle, it is vain to assail the rest. They are outworks ; this is the citadel. And when all is said, the sceptic still finds himself confronted with this dilemma : It is inconceivable that the disciples should have preached the Gospel of the Resurrection had they not believed it ; it is impossible they should have believed it had it not been true. This astounding proclamation had to be made in the very city in which Jesus had been publicly executed, within a few weeks of his death, in presence of thousands who had witnessed it. Had the Jewish rulers been able to produce the corpse of Jesus, or to furnish any equally decisive proof that his resurrection was a fable, the Crucifixion would have been, as they expected, the death-blow to the influence of Jesus. His followers would have dispersed. He would have remained a glorious, mysterious figure in the fading past. 'Fragments of his mighty voice' would have been borne to us through the ages. But the foundation of a spiritual kingdom, mighty enough to overturn the religions and philosophies of antiquity, to revolutionise the Roman Empire, and to sow the germs of the difference between the ancient and the modern world, would have been altogether impossible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Only if Christ really was what He was taken for, can we solve the enigma of primitive Christian faith, of the foundation, the spread, and the world-renewing power of the Christian Church. Christ could live as the God-man in the hearts of his followers only if He really was so."—CHRISTLIEB, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 423. (*Clark's Translation*.) Lecture vi., on "Modern Anti-Miraculous Accounts of the Life of Christ," contains an admirable criticism of the leading attempts to eliminate the supernatural from the history of Jesus, especially those of Schenkel, Strauss, and Renan. The lecture following, on the Resurrection, is also very able ;

## § IV.

What, then, is the testimony of the greatest of Teachers concerning the greatest of questions? What has Jesus told us of God?

On this, as on every other question on which He speaks at all, his tone is that of unlimited knowledge and absolute authority. His theology admits no per-adventures, no margin for conjecture, no balancing of opinion against doubt. He does not propose an argumentative basis of faith. He never goes about to prove the being of God. That is for Him the fundamental verity, apart from which there would be nothing worthy the name of truth; the prime condition of duty and virtue; the one grand certainty, deprived of which life would be destitute of both foundation and meaning,—a frivolous though painful enigma without a key. God, as Jesus teaches, is not a Theorem to be proved, but a Father to be known, loved, and obeyed. Not to know God is either men's crime or their misfortune; in either case their blindness. Of this blindness Jesus declares Himself to possess the remedy. His mission is to reveal God, not to argue about Him. He is come a light into the world, that men may no longer walk in darkness, but may have the light of life. The world, He tells us, has not known God, and because it knows Him not, it fails to recognise his authentic Messenger. The Father's

but the author (with Westcott and other eminent writers) adopts what appears to me the unfounded and erroneous view, that the risen body of Jesus, previous to his ascension, was no longer the body of flesh and blood in which He lived and died, but a spiritual and glorified body. Of M. Renan's romance, entitled *Vie de Jesus*, probably the most masterly dissection is from the pen of M. Caro, in his profound and brilliant work, *L'Idée de Dieu et ses Nouveaux Critiques*.

voice no longer finds its natural echoes in the hearts of his children, because they have closed their eyes, stopped their ears, and deadened their spiritual sense, and have thus sunk to the fatal level of a godless life, from which they have neither desire nor faculty to raise themselves. But those who receive the word of Jesus, given to Him by God, know surely that He came from God. "No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."<sup>1</sup>

It is thus that Jesus defines his position as a Divine Teacher. He declares Himself to possess a direct and intimate knowledge of God, shared by no other human being; and to have the power of imparting this knowledge not only by public teaching to mankind at large, but to individual minds by personal revelation. It is not implied that the knowledge so imparted shall equal either in kind or degree that possessed by Himself. The contrary is indeed implied in the promise of personal illumination, for what is personal varies with each distinct personality, and cannot be perfectly alike in any two individuals. Jesus could not reveal all He knew, except to a mind equal to his own. Moral character is, according to Him, the condition of Divine knowledge. In other words, our knowledge of God, like our most intimate knowledge of our fellow-men, depends on sympathy. But moral character in ordinary human beings involves growth. This knowledge, therefore, must be a growing knowledge, to be perfected only when perfect sinlessness shall be attained; and the soul, like an in-

<sup>1</sup> Had this remarkable passage been found as a fragment, it would without hesitation have been attributed to the author of the Fourth Gospel. Occurring as it does in both the First and the Third Gospels,—apparently as spoken on different occasions,—it points to a whole region of Christ's teaching, preserved for us nowhere but in the Fourth Gospel.



strument in perfect tune, though of narrow compass, shall be brought into unjarring accord with the infinite harmony of the Divine Nature.

Yet if the knowledge promised by Jesus were subjective merely, Christianity could have been only a private faith, never a public religion. It claims objective validity and certainty. It is not intuitional only, but rational; capable therefore of statement in language, and—to that extent—communicable from mind to mind. It has been said that all rich and ripe minds belong to one of two natural classes: intuitive or logical, Platonists or Aristotelians. The two great expositors of Christ's doctrine—St. John and St. Paul—at once occur as examples. The aspects in which they regard and present truth, as well as the phraseology and colouring of their teaching, bear strongly the stamp of their distinctive types of intellect. Yet their doctrine is substantially one. The reason is, that no such one-sidedness belongs to the Master. 'The Son of man' represents not this or that type of human nature, but Humanity. Jesus never reasons (except when leading his hearers to some practical conclusion); because a logical train of reasoning is the ladder by which we climb to certainty, whereas He stands before us as already on the platform of absolute knowledge, holding in his hand all the truth He came to teach. But in his authoritative declarations concerning God He supplies ample materials for logical reasoning and systematic analysis and synthesis. Though He teaches, like the ancient Hebrew seers, that there is a 'secret of the Lord'—which is 'with the righteous,' yet He announces a message from God which is to be published to every creature under heaven.

The Hebrew language employs a remarkable and profoundly philosophical phrase to denote that knowledge of God which is communicable in speech or definable in human thought:—“the Name of God.” This phrase Jesus adopts. He describes his teaching as a declaration of the name of God. (John xvii. 6, 26.) He commands his disciples to baptize their hearers “into THE NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” His main doctrine concerning God is comprised in this name—“THE FATHER.” It was not a new name for God. Homer sang of the Father of gods and men. The Roman Jupiter—like a rock-fossil commemorating a form of old-world life—tells of the primeval worship of the Heaven-father. Paul, on Mars’ Hill, can call Aratus to witness that we are the ‘offspring of the Godhead.’ In the Hebrew Scriptures God is occasionally, though rarely, spoken of as a Father. The invocation of ‘our Father in heaven’ in the Synagogue liturgy may possibly be pre-Christian. The Rabbis ventured to tell Jesus that they had “one Father, even God.” But this name, as Jesus bids men set it in their prayers and in the feelings, toils and aims, of everyday life, is new, as the draught of water fresh-drawn from the deep well and put to thirsty lips ; as the gem newly dug out of darkness and set in gold on a queen’s finger ; as the living landscape when the newly-risen sun bathes the dewy lawns and hills and woodlands in light. A FATHER in heaven who sees in secret and knows what things we have need of before we ask, yet who bids each of us, with our several burdens of need or weakness, grief or sin, to enter into our closet, shut the door and talk freely with Him ; who clothes the lilies, and without whom not a bird can fall to the ground, yet who will

much more care for and clothe us ; who wills not that one little one should perish ; who is righteous, holy, perfect, and good,—so good that none is good compared with Him,—and who sets for us no lower standard than “ Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect,” yet who does good to the evil and unthankful ; who seeks the spiritual worship of true hearts, and will come to make His abode with such, yet who watches with long-suffering love for the return of the undutiful child, ready to welcome the penitent wanderer without an upbraiding word, or a moment of chilling delay, to his Father’s home and heart:—such is the idea of God presented in the teaching of Jesus. “ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

What new light broke in this view of God upon the minds of even the most pious and cultured Jews, we may learn from the Apostle Paul, than whom—as the foremost pupil of Gamaliel, and probably a member of the Sanhedrim—we can desire no more competent witness. He compares the difference between Judaism and Christianity to that between the condition of the heir in his nonage, under bondage to tutors and governors, and his condition when of full age, released from tutelage and master of his inheritance. Only a Divine illumination, he teaches, can enable the soul to enter into this fulness of spiritual freedom and light, and to know and converse with God as our Father. (Gal. iv. 6.)

There are minds to whom, dwelling in this light and living by it, any inquiry into its reality must appear as superfluous as an inquiry into the reality of daylight, or a demonstration of the existence of the sun. Conscious

that their communion with the Father of spirits is as real as their converse with their fellow-men, they resent the very supposition that it may be an illusion, as a profanation of the inmost sanctuary of their being. But there are other minds to whom, whether from original constitution or from more transient influences, it is an imperative necessity to know the ground and warrant of their faith, and to find these outside themselves. The very fact that this view of God, at once so glorious and so simple, while it sets human nature on a vantage-ground of such splendid capacity and hope, comes home so tenderly to the need, the weakness, the abasement of human life, and affords so perfect a resting-place for man's whole moral nature, arouses their intellectual jealousy. They thirst for positive evidence that the anchor of their faith is not merely steadied by the length of cable with which it swings loose in unfathomable mystery, but grapples with a firm bottom of objective truth. The answer which Jesus offers to all such inquirers is his simple absolute assurance that He knows the truth, and that what He has told us is true. "He that sent me," He declares, "is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me; . . . and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him" (John vii. 28, 29; viii. 26).

It cannot be denied that this testimony, like the character of Him who offers it, stands alone. The question on which Christianity hangs is this:—Is the testimony of JESUS as trustworthy as it is unique, sublime, intelligible, and consolatory? Can we securely build an intelligent faith upon HIS word? If not, why not? Looked at in the calm light of reason, can his teaching be accounted for on any supposition but that of its truth?

Regarding Jesus as no more than the best and wisest of men,—and what but the very blindness of ignorance or prejudice can think Him less?—is it rational to suppose that He spoke under illusion? Is it not rather rational to believe that, where we doubt and conjecture, He saw and knew?

We in the valley stumble through the mist,  
He on the mountain-top beholds the morn.

At all events, there is no counter testimony to be weighed in the balance of authority against his. Where are the teachers whose loftier intellectual stature and profounder spiritual insight entitle them to call us from the feet of Christ to their own? Who are the men who have looked with more piercing vision than his through the mystery of the universe, and are able to tell us that, with the best intentions, Jesus erred; that Wisdom, Goodness, and Will, live on the surface only of Nature, not at its heart—are its product, not its cause; and that the God and Father whom Jesus thought He knew, and pretended to reveal to us, existed only in his imagination, a phantom reflection of his own supreme excellence?

“Never man spake like this man.” But can we be contented to think no more than this of Him who claims to reveal to us the Father? Is it only an empty form of words, that THE NAME into which He commanded his disciples to be baptized, is the name, not only of “the Father,” but of “the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”? I entertain and would express honest respect towards those who can rise to no higher view of Jesus than as the wisest, holiest, and most loving of men. It would be easy to name some among them whose devout faith in God, fervent love to Christ, and loyal obedience to what

they conceive to be his commands, are a pattern to all Christians, and would adorn any church. But they have against them the common sense of Christendom. To be condemned by decrees of councils—considering what councils have been—is a small matter. But their creed is condemned by that Church Authority which speaks in the all but unanimous consent alike of the great leaders of Christian thought and the saintliest patterns of Christian life during eighteen centuries. If the Fourth Gospel be accepted as the work of the Apostle John, it is impossible but by a process of forced interpretation, perilous either to intelligence or to honesty, to maintain that Jesus was a faultless man and yet no more than man. Our reverence for his character both as man and as teacher can be saved only by our faith that He meant what He said, and said what was true, when He declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . I and my Father are one.” If Jesus Christ spoke these words, and if we accept his own witness concerning Himself, we possess in Him not only an Infallible Teacher who declares to us the truth concerning God, but a Divine Person, in and through whom God converses with men. Not in meaningless boasting, but in words of truth and soberness, He says to us—“No man cometh unto the Father but by me;” “From henceforth ye know him and have seen him.”

Reason can neither attain nor require any higher certainty. At this point she has accomplished her task, and hands it over to Faith. In so doing she neither deserts her post nor abdicates her authority. For the office of Reason is threefold: *intuitively*, to discern the realities underlying and revealed by phenomena; *logically*, to arrange and test those trains of inference by

which our knowledge is inductively accumulated and deductively applied ; *constructively*, to frame those ideas in which the results of intuition and reasoning are permanently symbolised. But actual converse with things and fellowship with persons belong not to Reason, but to Will, Affection, and Faith. The examination of the claims of authority, therefore, falls within the province of Reason ; but when these are established, submission to authority is the office of Faith. Negatively, Reason can prohibit Faith from accepting any doctrine which contradicts either itself or any certainly known truth ; because unless all truth be consistent, Truth has for us neither meaning nor obligation. But positively, Reason must accept the revelations of Faith as she accepts those of the Senses and of Memory. Above the proudest heights of knowledge on which the daring foot of Reason can find standing-room, rises that pathless peak to which Faith alone can soar, in whose cloudless light and air Love alone can breathe and see, believing and knowing the LOVE OF GOD. Here, quest ceases in conscious certainty. The yoke of authority is transfigured into the badge of liberty. Doubt dies in the sunlight of experience. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "We love him because he first loved us."





LECTURE IX.

*THE VOICE WITHIN.*



## LECTURE IX.

### THE VOICE WITHIN.

#### § I. *Introductory.*

**M**AN aspires. An immense instinct in his nature points upward, like a spire of flame. Alone of earthly creatures he walks erect, lifting his eyes skyward. He feels an impulse to climb always to the highest point. The chamois climbs for pasture or refuge. The eagle soars mile-high, but with downward gaze, searching for prey. The song-lark astonishes and attracts us with its upward flight,—so human-like is it, such a parable and poem of man's aspirations ; yet,

—while its wings aspire, are heart and eye  
Still with its nest upon the dewy ground. <sup>1</sup>

No creature but man could find delight in scaling giddy ice-precipices, or drifting in balloons above the clouds, for the pure sake of surveying a wide horizon, and seeking to stretch, if he cannot break, the barriers that cramp his energies. The daring enjoyment of danger in pursuit of a goal so barren and transient, is not a mere effervescence of youthful spirits, muscular vigour, or

<sup>1</sup> “ Or, while thy wings aspire, are heart and eye  
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ? ”

*Wordsworth.*

English blood ; it is one of the vents which these open for man's innate tendency—irrepressible in proportion to the vigour and nobleness of his nature—to aspire ; to rise above himself, and tend towards some higher level than common life can yield. In the savage, this tendency is extinct or dormant ; a strong proof that progressive man cannot have sprung from savage ancestors. No theory of human nature can be true, no philosophy of life can be reasonable, which fails to take account of this indomitable set and strain of our being towards an Object higher than itself.

That which thus attracts, inspires, and elevates man's nature, it may be said, is THE IDEAL. True ; but this is no solution of the problem. For the Ideal rules man's nature only as it represents the Real. Take, for example, the idea of Liberty, of Philanthropy, of Art, of Moral Culture, of Human Progress. In these and other cases the perfect Idea outshines and outruns performance ; but, like a child's copy, like a wayside lamp, like a standard weight or measure, like a mathematical formula, its whole value lies in the realities it represents and the efforts it helps on towards attainment. The question we have to consider is,—Whether the highest Ideal is an exception to this beneficent law ; representing no reality, alluring man along a path that leads nowhere, and inducing him to waste his noblest energies and purest and loftiest affections in an objectless quest?

This aspiration—this upward pointing—must have some significance. It is a standing fact which science is not at liberty to ignore. If, upon a comprehensive survey, the leading facts of man's moral and spiritual nature accord with this tendency, proving it central and vital ; if, like converging rays, they grow more luminous

as they approach one focus ; if, by virtue of its innate requirements and forces, Humanity refuses to revolve in its proper orbit save under the attraction of an Infinite Object of love, reverence, obedience, and trust ; if, in a word, GOD is the complement of Man's life and being, severed from which they are a mutilated abortion ; then, unless human nature be a complicated lie, and human life a meaningless riddle, the existence of GOD must be the central fact of the Universe.

### § II. *Fatherhood.*

The primary human relation, in which life has its starting-point, is that of Parent and Child. Man shares with many of the lower animals (especially those of similar organisation) the need of parental care to secure life from perishing at the threshold. As this absolute dependence ceases, the proper work of education begins. The bodily frame, the intellect, the moral character, require separate but harmonious training. Education (worthy the name) aims to develop all the faculties of our nature, with a special reference to individual capacity ; and to produce health, energy, ease, and grace, alike of muscle, of thought, of feeling, and of behaviour. Its highest success lies in the formation of a pure, strong, noble, moral character. Even for intellectual training, however, certain moral qualities are demanded in the pupil: obedience, reverence, willingness to bow to authority and accept testimony,—in a word, faith. An accomplished teacher, gifted with a true vocation for his work, not seldom inspires a loyal enthusiasm of faith on which in later years his scholars may look back with envy of their former selves. These are for the

most part professional teachers, and their scholars such as have already left childhood behind. But all teachers of the young must be regarded as the Parents' deputies and helpers; and the idea of the Parental relation includes the relation of Teacher and Learner.

The child by degrees finds himself rising to the level of his teachers; perhaps above it. The pupil learns to scan a wider horizon than his master, gathers the fruit of a newer time, and, with a painful shock, has to confess that the oracles of his youth seem to have lost their inspiration. The tendrils of his mind have outgrown their props; but they are tendrils still,—useful to climb by only if they can cling to something higher and stronger. Hence 'hero-worship.' Some great statesman, or philosopher, or poet, or general, or popular leader, is accepted as the oracle of opinion and conduct. If this worship be worthily bestowed, its influence may be invigorating and elevating, in proportion as it is dangerous and debasing when the object of it is only a mock hero; not a star of the first, or even third or fourth, magnitude, but an *ignis fatuus*.

The link in our argument suggested by these facts is this: Reverence, obedience, dependence, loyalty, faith, are not among the childish things which the Child ought to outgrow and the Man to put away. They may miss their objects, but yet they are among the richest and most beautiful elements of a strong and noble character. A man is not less a man, but more, for looking up. Princes and despots have often been commiserated, because from their lonely elevation they can only look down; and often, like men gazing from a precipice, grow dizzy and lose self-control. It has perhaps been overlooked that a dead level of equality (to which some

suppose modern society is tending) would afflict men with kindred inconveniences. To have neither superiors nor inferiors, but to live in a crowd of equals, would be to breathe the atmosphere of a suffocating mediocrity, in which our noblest impulses would be stifled. Public honours and offices—the gilded spires and pinnacles and solid keystones of political society—are but the symbols of that natural leadership which is the soul of combined action. A nation, an army, a party, a movement, lives as it has wise and brave leaders. But those leaders, exalted as they may be above the mass by native vigour of genius, accomplished culture and popular confidence, and possibly blinded by the habit of self-reliance to their personal need of obedience, reverence, faith, and superior guidance, actually need these not less but more than inferior men; not less but more than the boy at school, or the child in its mother's arms. The stronger, wealthier, wiser, more fearless any man is, the more mischief he may do by a single false step. What he needs—whether it is to be had or no—is a higher kind of guidance than he can find in the council where his own vote turns the balance, or in the heart closest to his own, to which his deepest and most daring thoughts are a sealed mystery. He needs—he of all men—an unerring MIND from which to seek counsel, a Voice whose commands he may safely follow though the whole world said him nay; a Heart on which he may lean his heaviest load, and which holds more completely than he can himself the key to all his secrets.

The child in his need cries out, “My Father!”—in his trouble, “My Mother!” and the complement of his imperfect nature is at hand. He is helped, guided, comforted. The wise man in his wisdom, the strong

man in his strength, may be too proud to utter the child's cry: but if he does, is there no Ear to hear, no Voice to reply? When he knows that on his judgment, skill, courage, fidelity, hangs the livelihood of thousands, or the course of legislation, or the awful alternative of peace or war, or the welfare of unborn generations, and would fain cast this immense burden of care on one more able than himself to bear it, and rest somewhere his over-wrought brain and heart, as a weary child on its mother's bosom; is he only beating himself to death against the bars;—hemmed in by the hard, blind, deaf, dumb “Unknowable and Unconditioned”? Does the hideous silence of a desolate universe tell him that he is an orphan, whom Nature—meaning thereby force, molecules, and law—has nursed into faith, reverence, and sense of infinite need, only to turn his highest aspirations and deepest longings into mockery?

Whatever answer men may give to this question, it remains an undeniable fact that the IDEAL to which the necessities of man's moral nature point, is a Parent Mind in immediate relationship with every human being; to whom the weakest and the strongest alike may have recourse for unfailing guidance, authority, and sympathy, faintly typified by what the human parent supplies in early years to the dutiful, trustful, loving child; an Ideal which it is the culmination of man's misfortunes to be capable of conceiving, if indeed it be the wise man, not the fool, who has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

### § III. *The Love of God.*

Love is the strongest element in man's nature. Other affections present no parallel to its range and variety.



It holds dominion over every fibre of his frame, every faculty of his mind. Anger, terror, hatred, or grief may exert a more over-mastering power, but it is transient. Love endures: it can survive through a long lifetime the loss of its object, and exert unabated force in death. Particular desires and habits—to which also the name 'love' is commonly applied—as the miser's craze for gold, the drunkard's or opium-eater's rage for stimulant, the gambler's devotion to play, may assert a yet stronger tyranny over mind and body. But these are disease: love is health. Cold indifference, in the presence of objects worthy of admiration and love, is the mark of feeble or morbid and unsymmetrical life. Grief, hatred, revenge, or devotion to some science, art, or special purpose, may become the master-passion of a lifetime; but any of these is restricted in its object; its intensity depends upon that restriction, and its strength lies in contracting life within a narrow channel. Love is expansive and manifold, causing life to overflow its banks and mingle with the interests and sympathies of others. One form of love does not hinder another. A man may love his wife, children, parents, country,—each with intensity of attachment nowise weakened by the demands of the rest,—and may all the while love God above all. For whatever opinion be entertained as to the supreme fact of God's existence, the fact is beyond controversy that the love of God is in innumerable hearts a real and powerful affection, and has in a multitude of instances reached the force of a master passion.

The *moral* range of love far exceeds that of any other affection. In its lowest form, debased into lust, it becomes the most cruelly selfish and short-sighted of all passions. In its higher forms it can inspire pure un-

selfishness and complete self-sacrifice. Hence there have not been wanting moralists who have identified virtue with the widest form of love—Benevolence. The fallacy is manifest, for the assertion that Benevolence is a duty—even if it be the one all-embracing duty—implies that Benevolence and Duty are distinct ideas. But the fact bears witness to the place which love fills in human nature.

Christianity counts love to God the leading element alike in morality, in religion, and in happiness. It bases this affection on God's infinite love to us. Other religions, in which this element finds no place, have had their triumphs, devotees, martyrs. But unquestionably it is to this peculiar feature—despite the efforts of theological controversy, ecclesiastical bigotry, and religious persecution, to obscure it—that Christianity owes its power over mankind, its earliest and its latest conquests. Is this immense power based on illusion? an illusion which must have its root not in Christianity, but in human nature? How comes it to pass that such words as these were ever written? or, being written, have awakened such deep and deathless echoes in human hearts?—"He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for GOD IS LOVE."

My task rather forbids than requires rhetorical appeal. It is well. One need be master of all human eloquence to speak worthily of an affection sublimer than the love of truth, more ennobling than the love of country, more tender than the love of woman, wider than the love of humanity; bounded by no limits of age, sex, race, or circumstance; capable of dominating every other passion, of outglowing the fires of youth, defying the chill of time and care, and burning clear and strong amid the ashes

of age ; or to express justly the hardship of man's destiny, the grim irony of his condition, the hideous discord between his nature and the facts of the universe, if in his highest aspiration he can but embrace a cloud.

Our present business is simply to examine and weigh facts. The general fact from which we set out is the aspiration or upward pointing of human nature, which seems to demand as its counterpart some Being (or beings) superior to anything supplied by either individual or universal Humanity. The special form of this fact now under consideration is, that man's capacity for *LOVING*—apparently the highest, deepest, and strongest thing about him—although it perpetually wastes itself on base objects, can be adequately satisfied with nothing short of perfect excellence or moral beauty, including illimitable love joined with boundless wisdom and power, unchangeable truth, and immortal permanence. The question to be answered is,—What is the significance of this fact—what inference does it warrant ?

One remarkable character of love we are bound to take into account : its tendency to create an imaginary ideal that may justify its most lavish exercise. The lover surrounds his mistress with a halo of beauty, virtue, and wit, which less partial eyes fail to discover. The mother thinks no other child comparable to her own. The child believes his father the best and wisest man in the whole world. The patriot deems his countrymen the grandest, bravest, most enlightened, most virtuous people on the face of the earth. Sensitive hearts not seldom experience a pang never to be forgotten when first forced to confess that those whom they most love and revere are not the models of perfection they imagined them.

Shall Philosophy, in her passionless quest of truth, coldly assure us that to a thousand fond illusions like these Religion adds the most stupendous? A cynical scepticism, having no more faith in human nature than in any moral basis of the universe, may accept these facts as simply forming the crowning incongruity of that incarnate absurdity—Man. But thoughtful and earnest minds who have faith in human nature, and in some kind of progress towards perfection, and who believe this progress to depend on the conformity of human nature with the truth of the universe, are bound to inquire whether it be not fatal to such a belief to suppose that the loftiest and profoundest yearnings of our nature can be satisfied, and its highest moral strength and purity realised, through faith in an Unreality.

Emotion is not logic. The strength of a feeling is no proof of the reality of its object. We cannot too clearly see this, or too plainly state it. The emotions excited by fictitious narratives and dramatic representations are ready illustrations of a fact which requires no formal proof. But the case is utterly different when we are dealing with general capacities and normal tendencies of emotion. The emotions excited by a well-acted scene or a well-written tale have their proper objects in real life. Human nature has no objectless faculties. Although love tends (as we have seen) to exaggerate the claims of its object, and invest it with an unreal glow of fancied perfection, the qualities which attract and deserve love are real. The illusion concerns only the degree, and the absence of counterbalancing defects. But why are we so organised as to frame such illusions? If, in truth, the highest affection of which human nature is capable is doomed to expend itself on a phantom of imagination ;

if no real counterpart to it exists ; it follows that not only is man's nature false at the core, but falsehood is sublimer and more purifying than truth. The imaginary is grander than the real ; man is greater than nature, and yet miserable in his greatness.

Love in its highest form rises into worship. Adoration, worship, and idolatry are terms not seldom employed to express the exaggeration of love spell-bound by imagination. But when the Object or Person beloved is contemplated as an Infinite Presence, possessed of unlimited power, wisdom, and authority, as well as uprightness and lovingkindness, love finds itself overshadowed with awe, which, but for the dimness with which we grasp these ideas, would be overwhelming. Yet no mistake can be greater than that which supposes worship to imply an abject or painful attitude of soul. Worship of that which is beneath us degrades. Worship of that which is above elevates. And experience amply proves that the most reverent awe, even when complicated with such depressing emotions as the sense of sin, and personal unworthiness, and of gratitude for unmerited and boundless favour, is perfectly consistent with the most tranquil joy, manly freedom, and child-like trust.

Dispute as men may touching the reality of the Object of this love,—the Divine Ideal,—the reality and strength of the affection itself are indisputable. Like other affections, love to God may be simulated by imaginative sentiment, imitative sympathy, or wilful hypocrisy. Counterfeits suggest caution. But they cannot affect the genuineness of their originals. The writings of the Apostles John and Paul, like the Hebrew Psalms, present supreme love to God (based on the belief of his love to

us) not merely as an idea, but as an experience ;—the soul of virtue, the mainspring of action, and the crown of happiness.

Men like Augustine, Bernard, Fénelon, John Howe, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, whom it would be sheer folly to suspect of insincerity, or of not knowing what they meant by their words, do but shed the fervid light of genius on an experience which myriads of honest witnesses are at all times ready in homelier speech to attest, when they describe the intense reality of this supreme affection in the hearts which entertain it, and its power to gladden, console, elevate, and purify.

Emotion is not logic. No. But this immense capacity for love and worship towards an Object wholly beyond the range of our sensible experience, and infinitely above us, is one of the most noteworthy facts of our nature. It must have a meaning and use, unless that nature be intrinsically false and discordant. Dark indeed is the riddle of humanity, vain all faith in human progress, if man's highest flight is into misty vacancy ; if his deepest anchor swings loose in the bottomless gulf of the Unknowable ; if he is but the fool of his own dreams, when, rising above a world where all loveliness is perishable and what he loves most is doomed to vanish soonest, he stays his heart on what is eternal, and says, " I will take refuge in my God ! " <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Le vrai amour est une justice qu'on rend à l'excellence de ce qu'on aime. Sa nature est de sortir de soi, de s'oublier, de se sacrifier pour l'objet aimé, de ne vouloir que ce qu'il veut, de trouver notre bonheur dans le sien. Tout le reste n'est qu'un accident qui n'entre point dans l'essence de l'amour. . . . Dieu seul peut nous tirer hors de nous-mêmes, en se montrant infiniment aimable, et en nous imprimant son amour. Ce qui est romanesque, injuste, impossible, à l'égard de la créature, est réel, juste, et dû, au Souverain Être."—FÉNELON, *Entretiens sur la Religion*.

§ IV. *Conscience.*

From the contemplation of the primary affection and of the principal relation native to man, we advance to the examination of the testimony yielded by that portion of his nature of which it has been said—"Had it strength as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."<sup>1</sup>

Ethics, or the science of morals, presents three fundamental problems answering to the three great ideas of Virtue, Duty, and Justice or Right. (1) What is the Standard of Moral Perfection? (2) What is the Ground of Moral Obligation? (3) What is the Rule of Right and Wrong? The *first* problem primarily concerns our Reason, as involving a pure universal idea; but also, as involving a realised or realisable type, our Imagination or representative faculty. The *third* concerns our Will, together with the motives influencing it, and the conduct thence issuing. The *second* is in the strictest sense the province of Conscience: that spiritual sense which apprehends the obligation to feel and do right, and the guilt of having felt and done wrong; the eye which beholds the majesty of duty, the ear which hears the voice saying,—"*Thou shalt*;" the tribunal at which we stand every moment of our voluntary life, self-judged, acquitted, or condemned.

A volume would be required to discuss, even briefly, the false or defective moral theories which have sprung from the confusion of these problems, and the failure to discriminate virtue, duty, and rectitude. Yet this discrimination does not seem difficult. Virtue is moral excellence: that is, conformity of moral character to a

<sup>1</sup> Bishop BUTLER'S *Second Sermon on Human Nature.*

certain type or standard: manifested in the acts and habits of the will, the bent of the desires, the indulgence or mastery of emotions, and the prevalence of motives; for motives which to a good man are irresistible are powerless with a bad man, and *vice versâ*. Duty or Obligation is submission to the authority of moral law, recognised by conscience as perennially binding; obedience to which merits approval; disobedience, blame. Rectitude, Righteousness, or Justice, is conformity of will, act, feeling, and habit to the particular rules flowing from the application of moral law to special relations and circumstances. Right and wrong, therefore, vary according to persons and circumstances; Virtue and Duty remaining unchanged. It is right for a child to obey a parent, but not for the parent to obey the child, or for the child to yield obedience to a stranger. It is right for a jailer to confine, chain, and scourge a prisoner, but not for the prisoner to do the same things to his jailer. Virtue, again, varies as the *type* of excellence varies. A perfectly good child would be conformed to a very different standard from a perfectly good man; a perfectly virtuous poor man of limited intellect from a perfectly virtuous prince or sage. The virtue of an angel must be different from the virtue of a man. But we cannot think of duty or moral obligation as variable. Duties vary; because by '*a duty*' we mean simply the right as opposed to the wrong in some particular relation. The duty of each moral agent,—that is, the particular form in which moral obligation rests upon him, depends on his ability to render obedience, including his knowledge of the law, and of the authority enjoining it. Unconscious conformity to the law is not obedience; and unconscious nonconformity is not dis-



obedience. No one can be bound to do that which is impossible; and entire ignorance of duty constitutes such impossibility. But DUTY in itself—the obligation resting on every moral agent to fulfil that which is justly enjoined on him, is something which cannot vary with time, place, or circumstance. As it has no existence for those lower creatures which are incapable of apprehending and obeying a moral law, so you may, if you please, assert that it has no existence for man; that his freedom and responsibility are illusions, and the moral law a figment of his imagination. But if it exist at all, it must be always and everywhere the same.

Much keen argument and eloquent rhetoric might have been spared, concerning the unchangeable nature and eternal bases of morality, if these three fundamental problems of ethics had been clearly discriminated and firmly held apart. Particular duties and rights, injuries and crimes, depend on relations, and relations are according to the persons sustaining them. Suppose a race of beings resembling men, but with no sense of property. The idea of robbing a man of his land, or cattle, or purse, would be to them as unintelligible as the idea of possession. Neither theft nor honesty would have any place among them. Or suppose a race endowed with memories able clearly to retain the events of a single week, but altogether confused and untrustworthy concerning any remoter past. Verbal contracts and promises could have no binding force among them, nor oral witness any value, beyond one week; and the very idea of verbal truthfulness would probably not exist. So again, in a world in which marriage did not exist, no room being provided for parental, filial, or conjugal duties, the ruling ideas of social duty and virtue must be inconceivably modified.

Controversies otherwise interminable concerning the authority of conscience and the innateness of moral judgments, are in like manner set aside as irrelevant, when we clearly discriminate Duty from Rectitude (or Justice). The tremendous indictment against human morality in the famous third chapter of Locke's *Essays*, is unanswerable as to the liability of men's moral judgments to be perverted, and the inability of Conscience to set up or maintain any practical rule of right or wrong. But it proves nothing as to the innateness of moral judgments or sentiments in the only sense in which anything can be innate—as *blank forms*, waiting to be filled up. Without such blank forms, engrained in the very constitution of the mind, neither could sensations yield us any experience, nor experience any principles. Whether they are filled up rightly or wrongly depends partly on the original intellectual capacity and bent of personal character which each individual brings with him into the world ; but mainly on education. The filling up of the form in each particular instance—the judging any particular act, habit, or feeling to be conformed or opposed to the rule of right, or to the standard of virtue—is not properly speaking the office of Conscience. It is the office of enlightened reason and cultured feeling. Popular modes of speech include all this under the name Conscience ; and popular modes of speech (as we have before had occasion to remark) are not to be condemned for their natural and necessary inaccuracy. But, to speak strictly, only two judgments belong to conscience (with an affirmative and negative under each). (1) *Prospective* —“ You must do this, *if it is right* ; you must not do it *if it is wrong*.” (2) *Retrospective* —“ You deserve approval, *if you did right* ; you have incurred blame,

*if you did wrong.*" Thus the judgments of conscience are conditional as to the particular rule of right; but absolute as to the universal law of duty. These two differ, as the verdict of the jury differs from the sentence of the judge. On the question what particular things are right and what wrong, apart from some authoritative code, men are in hopeless uncertainty. But this does not forbid a wide general agreement that every one *is bound* to do right, and only right; that he is not at liberty to do wrong; and that he incurs guilt if he wilfully neglects what he knows to be right, or does what he knows to be wrong.

One would be glad to be able to say that the only exceptions to this agreement regarding the existence of Duty, and the indispensableness to man's progress and welfare of maintaining its sacred authority, occur among minds deep sunk in barbarism, or morally diseased. But we must not forget that there are philosophic theories in the air—theories arrogating a place in the front rank of human progress—which, by denying free will and responsibility, destroy the very foundations of morality. Ethics, according to this school of thought, is a branch of Physiology. Man is simply a sensitive machine. Virtue and vice are healthy and morbid states or habits of feeling: and what is called crime is the involuntary and necessary result of vicious organisation. If the right of punishment—denied by the bolder of these theorists—exist at all, it is only as a necessity for the safety of society. We remove a criminal as we amputate a limb, which we are sorry to lose, but never dream of being angry with for being diseased. To an advocate of such views, not only the present section of our argument, but its whole course and drift, must be a

waste of words. It would be absurd to ask a man to believe in God who has ceased to believe in morality. A more cogent logic than that of argument awaits these theories. Society will have to reckon with them. Either they must perish under its contempt, or—were it possible for them to gain the mastery—Society must perish.<sup>1</sup>

As the existence of conscience and of free will involves the existence of duty, so duty implies moral law. For an obligation resting universally upon moral agents, and a moral law, are but two names for one thing. But does a moral law imply a Lawgiver—a supreme personal authority whom men are bound to obey? And, further, can the idea of Virtue or moral excellence be explained apart from the existence of a Being who is Himself the original standard of such excellence?

In an original (that is, independent) and perfect moral being—such as we conceive God to be—there can be no room for these questions and distinctions. In such a Being, type, law, and reality must coincide. God must be a law to Himself. His virtue must consist in being always like Himself. Whatever He does must be right, not *because* He does it, but because his nature makes it morally impossible for Him to do wrong. If man were a perfect, though limited and dependent, being, adequately instructed, he would in like manner be practi-

<sup>1</sup> “ Sous l’influence des idées nouvelles, qui tendent à faire de la conscience et de la volonté une dépendance de la physique, il faut s’attendre que la liberté morale soit éliminée comme un ressort inutile, dans l’engrenage des phénomènes. . . . Le matérialisme contemporain n’a pas reculé devant la thèse extrême de l’irresponsabilité absolue. La volonté n’est pour lui qu’une des causes occultes par lesquelles nous voilons notre ignorance. . . . Un autre savant de la même école dit plus simplement, que nous ferions bien de ne juger et ne condamner personne. C’est le dernier mot de la doctrine ; celui que laissent toujours échapper, à un moment donné, les enfants terribles de la secte.”—E. CARO, *Problèmes de Morale Sociale*, pp. 225, 226, 229.

cally a law to himself. Conscience, both in commanding and prohibiting, in praising and blaming, would possess a force against which no other motive could successfully rebel; and in every particular case his feelings and habits would be a safe guide. Obviously, man is *not* an independent or original being: the ground and source of his being is not in himself. No less plain is it, unhappily, that he is a very imperfect being; and, whether adequately instructed or not, perpetually acts contrary to his knowledge, neglects what conscience bids him do, and does things for which conscience bitterly condemns him. His nature fights against itself; and a terrible sense oppresses him of a double bondage—the yoke of a law which he acknowledges but dislikes and disobeys, and the fetters of passions and habits which he condemns but indulges.<sup>1</sup> From a bunch of primroses, or even a single specimen gathered at random from the nearest bank, you may learn what a primrose ought to be. A chaffinch caught in the neighbouring coppice, will enable a naturalist to describe the type of the species. But no assemblage of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Russians, Turks, Arabs, Chinese—to say nothing of Papuans and Patagonians—nor yet any selected specimens from these, would enable us to define the moral type of humanity. The painter might from these specimens idealise the human form. The anatomist and physiologist might ascertain the typical structure of the human body. But the moralist would in vain attempt to determine the standard of moral excellence; and the wider his induction, the more hopeless would be his perplexity. The more extensively man's nature and history are studied, the less possible it becomes from human nature alone to

<sup>1</sup> Romans vii. 21–25.

frame any scientific definition of virtue, or lay down any scientific basis of moral law. Between morals and science yawns a gulf which, unless some higher authority can bridge it, threatens to cross with a fatal abyss the pathway of human progress.

In our own country, open war has not yet been proclaimed between science and morality. Any theory which reduces Mind to '*a set of attributes belonging to animals*,' and Will to a quasi-mechanical reaction of the nervous system under stimuli, must, if logically carried out, reduce virtue to a mere product of circumstances, and moral obligation to an illusion. Happily, men often stop far short of the logical results of their theories. At present, powerfully though the current sets in this direction, the leaders of the great anti-crusade are vigorously exerting themselves to prove that, as Mr. Mill maintained, we may have, not only '*a better religion*,' but a higher morality, without God, than Christianity or any form of Theism can provide. '*Altruism*' is confidently offered as a perfect substitute for the Ten Commandments, and indeed incomparably superior. In place of the old-fashioned conceptions of a primeval type of human innocence, lost through sin, and a restored type of human virtue, perfected through suffering — historically manifested in '*the man Christ Jesus*' — modern '*free thought*' bids us look forward to a type as yet dimly conceivable, but confidently to be expected in the far-off future, provided that no solar collision or explosion, or untimely cooling-down of our planet, interfere with the evolution of perfect Humanity.

In the mean time, examined by the only light which reason can employ, the light of the past and of the present (for the light of the future shines only for im-

agination or for faith), every theory of this class—*q. d.*, every theory attempting to build morality on isolated human nature—labours under two incurable and fatal defects: it presents no Type of Virtue; it lays no Basis of Obligation. In ethics as in physics, evolutionists attempt to substitute the idea of Process for the idea of Cause, with similar affluence of imagination and indigence of logic. The fallacy is transparent. If the grim romance could be proved as true as it is repulsive, what the wiser should we be as to the true theory of morals? Suppose, as an illustration, that men were originally destitute of the sense of colour, and that we could historically trace its development from complete colour-blindness to the sensitive and perfectly trained faculty of a Rubens or a Titian: this would make no difference in the relations of the several parts of the prismatic spectrum and the mathematical laws of their vibration. Were we all again to become colour-blind, the violet ray would still vibrate its seven hundred millions of millions of pulsations, and the red ray its two hundred millions of millions, every second, though we should be disabled from distinguishing them. In like manner, supposing that we could trace the development of a moral sense, or conscience, from its crude germs in the pains and pleasures, desires and terrors, of some pre-human anthropoid progenitor, or in the rude instincts of savage tribes, hating and devouring one another, to the cultured faculty of Confucius or Seneca, or the more highly refined moral sense which can appreciate, delight in, and enforce the morality of Christ's teaching and example: all this process could neither create Duty nor explain it. It might explain how men, analysing and generalising their experience, discovered that if every man loved his neigh-

bour as himself, and did to others as he would that they should do unto him, life would be well regulated and happy. But it could not explain the two first words in the command, "THOU SHALT love thy neighbour as thyself;" or the imperative form of the maxim, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." Suppose the process reversed, and that all mankind were to degenerate into brutal cannibals: murder, lust, theft, lying, and cruelty, would not on this account cease to be morally evil, though our 'tribal instinct' might cease to condemn them. It would still be true, though a truth lost to our knowledge, that a conscience which does not condemn these things must be either unenlightened or diseased. Nor can any such process, forward or backward, imaginary or real, alter the fact that conscience, when fully developed and rightly trained, recognises in the law of right an obliging force, an indefeasible claim to be obeyed. Still less can any such theory explain how the force of moral law can bind not mere outward conduct—indeed strictly speaking not outward conduct at all, apart from motive,—but 'the thoughts and intents of the heart;' how, *e.g.*, to take a man's property, liberty, or life, may, under certain circumstances, be not only justifiable but imperative, while covetousness, envy, and hatred are always and inexcusably evil.

Clearly, then, no hypothesis of the evolution of moral sentiments can explain even the idea, much less the actual reality of the obligation of duty—the sovereign authority of moral law. No man, no community of men, can possibly possess any innate authority. If this be not self-evident, the proof lies in the fact that it may be—and, as matter of history, often has been—the right and duty of one man to oppose his solitary conscience



and will to the conscience and will of the whole world, as represented by his countrymen and contemporaries. Socrates was right, and the Athenian people were wrong. Luther was right, and the Church and Empire were wrong. John Howard was right, and the ruthless treatment of prisoners sanctioned by public feeling, venerable precedent, and national authority, was utterly wrong. The little band of abolitionists who denounced slavery—first in England, in later days in America—were right, and that colossal mass of social, political, and religious sentiment which upheld slavery was wrong. As my reason cannot be forced to believe a contradiction were the whole world to enjoin it, so my will cannot be bound to bend to the will of the multitude, the nation, the legislature, the sovereign, or any human being, unless warrant can be shown from some authority, to which I and all human beings are naturally subject, requiring my obedience.

Evolutionism, then, hopelessly and helplessly breaks down in the attempt to answer two of the three fundamental questions of ethics, even if we allow that it supplies a hypothetical answer to the third. Utilitarianism (which, though included in evolutionist ethics, may be treated as a separate theory) equally breaks down; not only because it can give no account of the imperative authority of duty, forbidding me to do what is hurtful to others, how pleasant soever to myself; but because the very word 'utility' has no sense apart from the definition of the end to be attained.<sup>1</sup> Morally good actions are useful actions. Useful for what? For producing in the long run the greatest amount of happiness.

<sup>1</sup> See this point clearly and forcibly argued in Professor BLACKIE's admirable little volume, *Four Phases of Ethics*.

But what sort of happiness? The fool's happiness is the wise man's misery. The pleasures of the söt and the sensualist are the abhorrence of the sober and refined. What is rapture to one man would be torture to another. Human happiness has no meaning, and therefore utility in regard to moral conduct and character has no meaning, unless you can fix on some type or standard in conformity to which men's true happiness is to be sought. The moment a utilitarian moralist begins to talk of some classes of pleasure as nobler, higher, or worthier of human nature than others, he has virtually surrendered his theory. And if any kind of happiness be higher than any other kind, can it be denied that the sense of having done one's duty is the loftiest of all?

Christian Theism has an answer, clear, prompt, intelligible, to each of the three fundamental questions of ethics. Its answer may be thus summarised:

I. VIRTUE is that conformity of which man is capable to the character of God. The perfect revelation of that character is embodied in Jesus Christ. And the attainment of actual, growing, though as yet not perfect, conformity to it is possible through the living link of personal trust in and converse with Christ, through a Divine inspiration granted in answer to prayer.

II. DUTY, or moral obligation, is the absolute authority of God, as Creator and Lord of the universe and Father of spirits, over moral agents. Immutable in regard to God's own principles of action, it is in this sense mutable, and dependent on his sovereign will, that the moral relations of all beings to God, and to one another, spring out of the nature and faculties with which He has endowed them.

III. RECTITUDE consists in choice and conduct in-

spired and ruled by those motives which are demanded by the nature God has bestowed upon man, and the relations in which He has placed men to Himself and to one another. The rule of right must, therefore, practically consist in conformity to the Divine Will, and is summed up in perfect love to God and to men.

Whether this solution of the triple problem be accepted or not, it is the only complete one yet offered, and we may therefore presume is the only solution possible to human reason.

CONSCIENCE, then, like the rest of man's nature, points upward. Morality demands a Personal supreme authority as its explanation. Humanity, as capable of moral excellence, cries out for the living God, both as the Ideal of goodness and as the supreme Motive of life. Man's moral nature may be likened to an angle, capable of expanding or contracting; and God's character is as the circle on which alone the angle can be measured. That man's highest nature—his noblest happiness, and capacity of moral excellence—thus requires him to believe in God, is not in and of itself a demonstration of God's existence.<sup>1</sup> But it shuts you up with a logic from which there is no escape to this alternative:—Either God exists, or else the voice of Conscience is a lie; moral obligation is a fiction; and human virtue is an unknown quantity, the measure of which (if measure there be) lies in the incalculably distant future, as unknowable as the Cause of all.

<sup>1</sup> And therefore Kant was inconsistent when, from the "categorical imperative" of Duty he inferred the existence of God, and "by means of the life-boat of his ethics, rescued from the shipwreck of his metaphysics the truths necessary to human dignity and happiness."—(Rosencranz, quoted in Mr. Rogers's *Life of Kant*, in *Encycl. Brit.*) But it was a glorious inconsistency, for which he deserves immortal honour, though it ought to have made him suspect a flaw in his theory of human knowledge.

§ v. *Progress.*

Among the ideas which have laid tenacious hold on the mind of our generation, one of the most splendid and potent is the idea of HUMAN PROGRESS. I venture to think that, like some other ideas on which modern thought prides itself, without caring to ask how it came by them, this sublime conception owes its origin to Christianity. The form in which it passes current among men of science seems to me a dim and mutilated copy of that in which it is familiar to us in the writings of apostles and prophets. Such a suggestion will of course be regarded in some quarters with supreme scorn ; but it is more easily derided than refuted. The idea of Human Progress which Christian thought derives partly from the Hebrew Scriptures, but chiefly from those of the New Testament, contains several sublime but clearly defined subordinate ideas.

First, the existence of a current of Divine Purpose running through the troubled waters of human history, giving meaning and unity to the apparently aimless struggles and incessant rise and fall of states and races. Secondly, a Divine Public Law—impartially binding on all human beings—enjoining perfect justice and universal good-will ; obedience to which therefore would involve the cessation of war, slavery, tyranny, unjust tariffs, class jealousies, and social vices of every kind. Thirdly, an adequate Motive to Obedience to this law in the love of the Divine Father to every human being, and the hope offered to the guilty and the fallen of restoration to the esteem and trust of their fellows. Fourthly, a defined Standard of individual human perfection.

Fifthly, a Personal Head of the human race, offering a living centre for the universal brotherhood of men. Sixthly, the dependence of progress, alike for the individual and for the race, upon the Knowledge of Truth—not scientific, but moral and divine. Seventhly, the duty of every one who knows and obeys truth to join himself to that great Confederation which Christ has founded, irrespective of national and social distinctions, for the purpose of rendering truth current and supreme throughout the world. Lastly, the ennobling and stimulating faith that no effort for the highest good of mankind shall be in vain, but that if even it fail of its aim in this imperfect and preclusive stage of human existence, it shall bear fruit, for the worker and for the race, in the perfect and eternal life beyond the grave.

It cannot be honestly denied that this vast but harmonious scheme presents a clearly intelligible view of human welfare and progress, and assigns causes and methods which have at least some appearance of being adequate to the stupendous end proposed. It bases the unity, moral culture, elevation, and happiness of the Human Race on the fundamental relation of man to God. It exhibits the true progress of mankind as the development—evolution, if you prefer the term—of a Divine plan, in which men may be ‘fellow-workers with God.’ And it links indissolubly the welfare of the humblest worker with the glorious destiny of the great brotherhood of the sons of God in a future superior to cosmic change, which will not be imperilled even though millions of years hence our planet should dissolve in the heat of its arrested motion, or consume in some solar outburst, or wheel vacantly in endless night round a dead sun, a frozen desert of death.

Compared with the matchless splendour, yet perfect intelligibleness and logical unity, of the Christian scheme of human progress and perfection, how meagre, meaningless, and inadequate, appear the theories proposed in its stead by those who are calling us to worship "our Father Man," in place of "our Father who is in heaven," and proclaiming with prodigious blast of trumpet that "the kingdom of man is at hand!" These theories, so far as they have any foundation but fancy, are based partly upon the fact of progress in the past; partly on what science may be expected to effect in the future. We are told of *a law*—"the great law of human progress;" but what this law is, we are not told, except in the vaguest terms. And with good reason; for under any serious attempt scientifically to define it it evaporates into rhetoric.

Broadly made, the statement is undeniable, that, as knowledge grows, men make progress. But what sort of knowledge, and what sort of progress? Has any universal tide of progress indicated in the whole race of mankind a spontaneous impulse, setting in the direction of a better future? Or have not stagnation and decline been the fatal rule, and progress the redeeming exception; stirring with its regenerating force the inert masses of humanity as a stream fresh fed by melting snows and summer rains stirs and draws the else stagnant lake through which it flows? Do savage nations at the present day disclose any tendency to progress which might enable us scientifically to observe the germs of nascent civilisation, and to seize the key to the secret of social evolution? On the contrary, no example can be adduced of a thoroughly savage tribe elevating itself in the absence of any impulse from without; nor any hint

of proof that it is possible for the savage mind, individual or collective, to originate that conception of a desire for a higher state which is the first condition of progress. The wilds of Central Africa, like those of Peru and of Mexico, contain traces of a vanished civilisation ; even as the language of its godless tribes contains traces of a dead religion. In those Polynesian islands where a scanty population fringes the sea - coast, and where Christianity has stepped in just in time to save them from extinction, evidence has been discovered that a numerous inland population anciently existed ; and their sacred songs point back to a higher, not a lower, state of society.<sup>1</sup> Yet the capacity for progress exists, as is shown by the wonderfully rapid advance made in a few years when a savage tribe embraces Christianity, or when (as in the case of African children rescued from slavers, and even of the despised Australians) children of savage parents are placed under Christian education.

The great civilisations of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, perished, bequeathing scanty legacies to the progress of mankind. The history of the Hebrew people shows a nation rising and falling, advancing and retrograding, and at last ruined and broken up, with a constant ratio between their national prosperity and their moral and religious condition. The civilisation of Greece and of Rome, after touching, each in its own line, a pitch

<sup>1</sup> For this illustrative fact I am indebted to my friend the Rev. S. J. Whitmee, whose geographical and ethnological studies enable him strongly to confirm the views here indicated. The testimony of hasty travellers, ignorant of the native languages, and ignorantly contemptuous in their estimate of the natives, is of no value compared with that of missionaries under whose guidance the islanders have ceased to be barbarians, and whose long residence and converse have made them intimately familiar with the native languages and modes of thought. But some theories are more easily constructed in the absence of facts than in their presence.

never surpassed, declined and sank in ruin, corruption of morals and death of religious faith being in both cases either causes or symptoms of national decay. A thousand years ago the lamp of philosophy and of physical science was held in Moslem hands ; and, looking at the barbarism into which Europe had sunk, it might have seemed as if the life-blood of history and the promise of the future belonged to Islam. Six hundred years ago the most powerful empire in the world was that of the Tartars, and the most splendid court in the world that of the Great Khan Kublai at Cambalu or Peking. Why have all these mighty tidal waves paused at high-water mark, and ebbed, never to flow again ? What universal law of human progress could have determined that the people of a small northern island, of mingled blood and tongue, whose nationality seemed to have received its death-blow eight hundred years ago on the field of Senlac, and lay bleeding in the dust during two centuries, without a language, without a constitution, with the bitter sense of wrong and oppression dividing the subject classes from the alien ruling class, should to-day girdle the earth with its commerce, language, empire, and polity, and lead the van of the world's civilisation ?

To speak of the partial, irregular, intermittent, yet on the whole splendid and amazing progress in art, science, and wealth, the triumphs of which surround us to-day, as "*the progress of the race*," is to use very vague and misleading phraseology. Mankind at large have indeed a claim to share this immense treasure with its favoured inheritors or discoverers. The whole human race has a reversionary interest in its promised benefits ; but progress is at present confined to a few select nations.



Among the great Oriental races, with their magnificent traditions, the Japanese alone have caught (if even they can be truly said to have caught), not the mere imitative form and colour, but the spirit of Western civilisation. How long will it be before the mass of the human race shall fall into rank and join the march? Or what security have we that the past may not repeat itself in the decline and decay of modern civilisation, and the priceless treasure accumulated within the last few centuries—largely within our own memory—be dissipated before the time arrives for its universal distribution?

Modern civilisation, it may be said, is too strong to be in any danger from overwhelming assaults such as that which submerged Western Rome beneath the barbarian flood, that which swept away Eastern Rome before the Turkish artillery, or that which trampled down the civilisation of Peru and Mexico under the feet of Christian barbarians. But its chief security is supposed to be found in the unexampled progress and rapidly widening diffusion of Physical Science. The wholly unprecedented rapidity of scientific discovery during the last two generations constitutes rather a difficulty than a help in formulating a law of progress. A law of progress (if the phrase have any scientific meaning at all) must mean either a generalisation of observed facts, or the formula of a regularly acting permanent force. If we were to generalise from the recorded facts of the last three thousand years, the prognostic would be gloomy enough. We should infer that decline will follow progress as the ebb succeeds the flow; that the growth of luxury, the corruption of morals, and the dissipation of wealth, aided perhaps by the exhaustion of destructive wars, will, by slow decay or violent shock, overthrow the pro-

sperity of the nations now at the head of the human race, dragging down art, science, and culture, in their fall, and leaving young nations and new institutions slowly to grow up among their ruins. There are not wanting in modern society "rocks ahead," and anarchic disintegrating forces, to lend probability to these dark forebodings.

If this is not to be so ; if the Future is not to repeat the Past—as I for one do not for a moment believe it will—it must be because some force is at work (or forces) strong enough to urge Society forward with unflagging energy, and to secure the two grand conditions of undisturbed progress—freedom and peace. Intellectual knowledge is not such a force ; still less that select and fully organised portion of knowledge which we name science. Science has no self-preserving or self-propagating power. At every step it depends on an emotion—the love of knowledge. Were this to decline, science must wither. It is a powerful passion, but not one of which all minds are capable. The lamp must have a hand to hold it if it is to light our path ; the standard a standard-bearer if it is to inspire our march. Nor has physical science been hitherto the mainspring of the world's progress. No exaggeration could be wilder than to attribute to it the civilisation of the Greeks, the Romans, or the modern nations of Europe. Well-timed inventions have exerted a mighty influence : the Mariner's Compass, borrowed through the Crusaders from the Tartars ; Gunpowder, stumbled on by chance in quest of something else ; Printing, the fruit of genius and patient industry. But these belong to the domain of art, not science. The deeper springs of progress have lain in motives appealing to men's passions, desires, love or hatred, sense of duty,

and sympathetic enthusiasm : in war, commerce, art, love of liberty, religious enthusiasm, and the influence, most incalculable of all the factors of human history, of great men. At any moment a child may be laid in some obscure cradle who may live to change for good or for evil the fate of the world. And it is very far from certain that his forte must be science.

For my own part, I believe in human progress, because I believe in the kingdom of Christ, and in a Divine Purpose running through the whole life of man. But if I could strike these out of my calculations, it would appear to me that the anarchic and disintegrating forces at work in modern society are stronger than those which make for the unity, elevation, and happiness of mankind. The contemporary leaders of revived Epicureo-Stoicism have been born and bred in air into which, foul-charged though it be, the leaves of the Tree of Life cease not to pour their life-sustaining breath. It is with them a point of honour to maintain a high standard of morals, and even (according to their notion of it) of religion. But let a generation grow up to whom the name of God has from infancy been a mockery, and the name of Jesus has had no music. Let the Fear of God cease to cast its solemn shadow, and the Love of God to shed its blessed light on men's daily lives. Let the hardening, shallowing process go on of contemplating men as nothing but the highest kind of animals, and man's life as having no superhuman background, no super-earthly future,—a dreary landscape with neither mountains nor sky. Let physical Science, while she multiplies and unifies the objects of man's study within her own range, rob them of spiritual meaning, and disable him for higher walks of knowledge ; and, while

ministering to his luxury in a thousand delicate inventions, loose the rein of conscience, leaving virtue, honour, happiness without a standard, duty without a sanction, rectitude without an intelligible rule. Should this prove to be the direction in which human progress shall be steered by its self-appointed pilots, then the issue cannot be doubtful. History, with far-resounding echoes, will once more proclaim her awful lessons—that not Knowledge and Wealth, but Virtue and Religion, are the central pillars of the commonwealth ; and that the blind giant who pulls these down buries himself in the general ruin.

§ VI. *Providence and Prayer.*

Events are as capable of manifesting both purpose and moral character, and thus of revealing and identifying personality, as structures. The conduct of a decisive campaign, the issue of a delicate and difficult negotiation, the success of a daring but far-sighted speculation, may as clearly reveal the mental and moral qualities of the general, the statesman, or the man of business, as a machine displays the skill and patience of its constructor. The results under the given circumstances may fully warrant our saying, “There is but one man in the world who could have done that.” In like manner, if the Almighty Power and Illimitable Intelligence which formed the material universe be also the Sovereign Will, Infinite Wisdom, and Perfect Love whose behests all things combine to fulfil ; the course of events may, and we should expect will, be such as to furnish evidence of the existence and character of the Supreme Ruler.

Moreover, if God be at least as free to act in and upon his own creation as men are in regard to that small

portion of it allotted to them for habitation ; and if it please Him to hold converse with men as his children, and to encourage their trust and love, it is very reasonable to suppose that He may permit and even enjoin them to present requests which, if consistent with their true welfare and his larger designs, He will fulfil. Thus three great ends will be answered : men will be lifted into close, affectionate, and ennobling converse with their Creator ; impressive and unanswerable evidence will be given both of his goodness and of his absolute control over nature ; and the particular bestowments received in answer to prayer will possess a value which never could have belonged to them if given unsought.

The belief in God, sincerely and intelligently entertained, cannot fail to exert a decisive influence on conduct. It will inspire and it will restrain. And since the primary condition of human welfare is action according to truth, if this belief be true it will naturally produce such beneficial results, and the neglect of it be so injurious, both in private and in public life, as to afford a practical verification of its truth. But beyond and above this, if human affairs are really subject to Divine control, there must be a superhuman purpose running through them—a story in the life of every man, of every nation, and of the whole race, which, could we decipher it, would furnish proof of Divine guidance, and constitute a portion of God's revelation of Himself to mankind.

This view of human life, widely though obscurely recognised in many religions, pervades the Bible. Mankind, and not mankind only but the whole universe, is regarded as a kingdom of God, ruled according to universal and absolutely wise laws. But since laws have

no self-existence or self-executing power, but are simply forms of thought defining the limits of real forces, all the forces inherent either in material nature or in the minds and wills of men are regarded as in their every act subordinate to that Original Force on which they depend—the will of God. Thus that form of modern thought which opposes to the idea of Divine Rule the idea of ‘the Reign of Law,’ and consequently regards Prayer as irrational and vain, is seen to be a one-sided, and therefore false, view of the universe. For if there be no Supreme Force controlling all the separate forces of material and of human nature, one of two conclusions follows: either every one of those manifold forces must control itself, so as to be harmonious, not discordant, with all the rest, which is absurd; or else ‘laws’ must have self-sustaining and self-executing force, which is likewise absurd.

This one-sided and, when analysed, absurd view has doubtless been encouraged by well-intended but inaccurate or unmeaning phrases current among believers in providence and prayer; such as—‘*a special providence,*’ ‘*an extraordinary intervention of providence,*’ ‘*quite providential,*’ and the like. The notion conveyed by this style of speaking is, that, for ordinary purposes and for the mass of mankind, things are allowed to run on of themselves in their natural course; but that for special ends, for particular persons, and at particular moments, Divine Providence “*interferes:*” much as if we should imagine a steamship left on the whole to take her own course across the ocean by the working of her engines and the force of wind and current, the steersman at rare intervals running for a few moments to the helm to avoid an impending collision. No wonder that if a thoughtful

man be asked to choose between such a view of Divine Providence as this and scepticism, he prefers scepticism. He thinks the Steersman may be dispensed with altogether. The idea of Divine Providence pervading the Bible, on the contrary, from its simple primeval narratives to its full philosophy in St. Paul's Epistles, is that of the Hand always on the helm : as needful to keep the vessel in her regular course as to make her swerve from it to succour a shipwrecked crew or to pick up a drowning child. Causation, chance, volition, and miracle are not partitioned off by fixed barriers, but melt insensibly into one another ; all, though in different ways, everywhere and always controlled by the will of God.<sup>1</sup>

Prayer, on this view of nature and of human life, is as reasonable, and may be as efficacious, as the request of a child to a father. It deranges no order, interferes with no law, contradicts no true philosophy of mind or of matter. If the child's request be foolish or harmful, the wise father refuses it ; yet it may be good for the child to have made it. Or the thing asked may be intrinsically worthless, and yet the granting of the request may be of great value to the child, as a token of his father's love. Or the father may have intended to bestow the desired gift, and yet see reason to make its bestowal conditional on his child's request. In the case of the Divine Father we have further to bear in mind that the petition has been foreseen from the beginning, so that preparation, if needful, may have been made ages ago for promptly answering a child's prayer.<sup>2</sup> None the less

<sup>1</sup> This view of Divine Providence in relation to the course of nature and to human life has already been considered in another aspect in Lecture vii.

<sup>2</sup> Who can tell how long the well had been dug which was waiting to answer "the voice of the lad" Ishmael, as he lay, within an hour of death, under the bush in the desert ? (Gen. xxi. 17-19.) It must be confessed that

is the prayer the reason—the *cause*, in the sense in which Will admits causation (apart from the force of habit), *q. d.*, the *motive*, of the event which furnishes its answer. Nothing more is needed to reconcile the efficacy of prayer with the steadfast working of nature according to fixed law, than that God should be as free to act as man, on a scale corresponding to his power and resources. And if religion be the deepest need of human nature, then no law in the Universe, physical or moral, is more beneficently wise than the great law of prayer, —“ Ask, and it shall be given you.”

It was at one time my hope to deal somewhat fully with this topic of Divine Providence, including the function of prayer ; but the field is too wide. It deserves a volume to itself. I therefore interpose but two remarks, before hastening to touch in conclusion on a question which, if I were to pass by in silence, these Lectures would seem wanting, not merely in completeness, but in honesty.

I. Theism, like all substantial knowledge, admits of the test of verification. The Bible doctrine of prayer does not indeed justify any profane pseudo-scientific experiments, in which believers in prayer might be challenged to a kind of wager of battle, the other parties to the experiment staking their hope and credit on its failure. Childlike faith and manly reverence are essential conditions of true prayer. But the histories of the Bible present the fulfilment of prayer as a fact bulking largely in human experience ; and its promises place it within the reach of every candid and humble spirit to Christians do not always speak intelligently concerning prayer. On the other hand, the grotesque caricatures of the Christian and Biblical theory of prayer gravely put forth by certain scientific writers, do little credit to either their candour or their information.



verify this fact. He who can say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; . . . I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication," has an assurance of God's existence which reasoning can neither give nor shake.

II. The testimony of those who profess and sincerely believe that they have verified this fact, and in whose conviction therefore God's existence is a truth within the range of personal experience, composes a body of experimental evidence altogether unique. It extends in an unbroken and ever-widening series through several thousands of years. Its clear unhesitating voice has the same tone and emphasis in all ages, in all languages, in all circumstances. Every day adds to it. It has the breadth and steadfastness of a law of nature. The witnesses include men of every class, minds of every calibre; apostles and Sunday scholars, kings and peasants, saints and sinners, martyrs and merchants, poets and colliers, philosophic thinkers and men of plain hard common sense, grey-headed statesmen and newly-converted cannibals. To these last, the news that the great God loves them, and that if they speak to Him He will answer them has been the lever which has lifted them, within the time an English boy spends at school, from naked savages to decently-clothed, gentle-mannered men and women, reading the Bible for themselves in their own tongue, meeting for worship in churches which their own hands have built, and welcoming peaceful commerce to their once deadly shores.

What does this body of testimony mean? Is there anything else in human history to compare with it, for unity in such immense multiformity, for extent, both chronological and geographical, for persistence, for mass

force, majesty? Can it be that it means nothing? Science cannot allow a single line in the spectrum of a rare metal, or the minutest point of light detected by the telescope wandering across the sky, to escape her keen watchfulness. Is she at liberty to pass by with scornful indifference this broad track of human experience, beaten since the dawn of history by uncounted millions of feet, and marked with new footprints every hour? Or can this unrivalled and superb array of testimony be scoffed out of existence by a sneer at fanatical illusion and a few common-places about the immutability of physical law?

#### § VII. *The Enigma of Life.*

If the deepest basis of faith, the most convincing evidence of the existence of God, be found in human nature itself, in the echo given to the Voice of the Universe, the Voice from Heaven, and the Voice of Jesus, by the Voice Within; it must not astonish us if human nature also supplies the most portentous stumbling-blocks to faith. For there is no worse stumbling-block than a foundation-stone out of place. It would be neither wise nor honest to deny that there are such obstacles, or to underrate their magnitude: moral perplexities, which thoughtful believers have always felt and often confessed to inflict a painful strain upon their faith, and which form the fatal rock on which the faith of many thoughtful minds suffers melancholy shipwreck. These difficulties may be summed up in two words, and the two words condensed into one. The single discord in the music of the Universe, the single rebellious fact which harshly clashes with the according witness of material nature, of autho-

riety, and of man's own conscience, affection, and experience to the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator, is—the misery and wickedness of man. And since his misery is traceable to his sin—*q.d.*, to his failure to fulfil the moral law of his nature, these two may be summed up in one. Sin, or moral evil, with the frightful and abounding misery of which it is the mother, is the one dark enigma of the universe. This is the archaic mystery into which innumerable later and lesser mysteries run up. Science has no more discovered than it can dispel it. Its formidable power consists in this, that it is a moral difficulty. Intellectual difficulties may be soothed, if not solved, by the consideration of our ignorance. But if we assert our ignorance in moral questions, we run the risk of dethroning conscience and undermining religion. Faith turns pale as Reason directs her lamp on this abyss of mystery, lest from the gloom the frightful conviction should peer out that Divine love and righteousness not only infinitely transcend, but are utterly unlike all that those names mean to us.

“I admit,” the candid and perhaps reluctant sceptic may say, “that the difficulties raised on the score of the prevalence of suffering in the animal world, in which man takes his chance with the lower creatures, have been fairly met. I grant that the laws in conformity with which suffering is produced are, on the broad scale, beneficent and wise ; that death is for the sake of life ; and that diseases, tempests, earthquakes, volcanoes, conflagrations, and the like, are incidents in a system of things so comprehensive and admirable that we can easily afford to disregard what to our imperfect knowledge is an insoluble residuum of unaccountable evil. I admit, further, that if man has a share of suffering,

physical and mental, compared with which that of all other sensitive creatures seems slight and transient, suffering has for him a moral character which may even render it a blessing of priceless value. I recognise the beauty of the Christian view, alike consoling and elevating, that the severest suffering of mind and body is a fatherly chastening, a purifying discipline by which faith, patience, fortitude, sympathy and obedience, are perfected. It may rightly be regarded as "a light affliction which is but for a moment," if it is to work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I acknowledge, yet further, that as the great mass of disease is preventible by close obedience to the laws of health; and as injustice, dishonesty, covetousness, licentiousness, intemperance, and idleness are manifest transgressions of undeniable laws of human nature, which being extirpated, poverty and the great bulk of human misery would quickly vanish, and this earth become a kind of paradise, so it is reasonable to conclude that all moral laws, through the breaking of which men become miserable, are wise and beneficent; that all human misery is traceable to the breach of such laws; and that if they are to be maintained, transgression must be followed by penalty. It is a beautiful theory,—moral discipline on the one hand; on the other, moral retribution.

"But I look out into the real world. I see it full of men, women, and children whose sufferings are neither a profitable chastening nor a just retribution. They started in life weighted with the crimes and misfortunes of their progenitors; multitudes of them defective, if not diseased, in body and mind; pre-doomed to want, crime, and wretchedness. Their burden crushes them. The

furnace does not purify,—it devours. Better times may be in store afar off, but not for them. The hope of a heaven that will make infinite amends for earth may comfort others; it shines not for them. The present and the past are filled, and the future is heavy with a mass of unutterable misery, which, if a man could realise, he must go mad or his heart must break.”

If this wail be sincerely uttered, in the spirit not of mocking scorn, but of Christ-like pity for men, God forbid that it should be slightly or coldly answered. God forbid that any whose faith finds sure foothold on Divine truth, and fixes a firm grasp on Divine love, should have anything but sympathy and brotherly compassion for a soul wrapt in the storm-shadow of this awful doubt, unable to seize the life-line or feel the bottom. For our own, as well as for the Doubter's sake, let us be honest. Our faith is worth little if it fears to look doubt in the face. Opiates are dangerous remedies, and I cannot but fear that one effectual way of ministering to the growth of unbelief has been the practice of smoothing over the surface of difficulties, ignoring or undervaluing their real force, and leaving them to rankle unsatisfied, inflamed with a sense of our lack of candour. To what purpose is it to meet the logic of unbelief with the logic of faith, and win barren intellectual victories, if all the while conscience be wavering on which side to enlist, and the heart be a prisoner in the dungeon of doubt?

Let us see first how far the ground is firm under us, and not fancy the granite cliff about to dissolve into quicksand because the surges of doubt wildly wrap its very brow in their spray. Let us go back to that ground-distinction between physical law and moral law, between

cause and motive, between external nature and the soul of man, which certain gifted thinkers and eminent rhetoricians strenuously labour to explode, but which is as indestructible as the distinction between the centre of a circle and its circumference, or between benevolence and mechanics. A physical cause is an antecedent condition. A moral cause or motive is a foreseen result. That which is consequent in the order of external nature is antecedent in the order of will, choice, and moral action. The physical order is invariable, never broken. The moral order is variable, perpetually disregarded. A physical law declares that which is, has been, and will be, in every case comprehended by it. A moral law prescribes that which in every case ought to be, whether in fact it is or no. The very gist of the Difficulty we are dealing with lies here:—physical and moral laws are so hopelessly out of gear, that multitudes of human beings are, by the physical laws of circumstance and bodily organisation, disabled from knowing and obeying those moral laws on which their true welfare depends. To confound moral with physical law therefore,—motive with cause, and will with action and reaction, is to close the shutters and put out the lamp. It prevents us not only from solving, but even from seeing, this or any other moral problem.

Man, then, is a moral being. His happiness and welfare, if they are to accord with his nature, must be found, not like those of the lower animals, in obeying his instincts, indulging his impulses, and yielding to circumstances, but in doing, being, and delighting in that which moral law enjoins. It will not be enough that he obeys conscience, unless conscience be guided by reason, and reason by truth. It follows, that if the true happiness

of mankind depends upon virtue and knowledge, vice and ignorance must, in proportion as they prevail, be sources of misery.

Secondly, man is an ideal being. That is to say, just as there is a certain typical mould and symmetry, in accordance with which the excellence of outward beauty aimed at by the sculptor or the painter consists, so there is a typical mould and symmetry of moral emotion, habit, and behaviour, constituting the excellence of inward beauty or virtue. This view is irreconcilable, I admit, with that grotesque but fashionable theory which imagines man's moral nature to have evolved itself, first, out of the non-moral nature of the brute ; and, secondly, out of the immoral nature of the savage ; each virtue in turn having been discovered through the practice of its opposite vice ; and each individual learning to condemn whatever, though pleasing to himself, was offensive to the tribe. It is irreconcilable also with the dream of an indefinable perfection of collective Humanity, to be attained through intellectual progress in a problematical and incalculable future. Letting these theories go on their own way, we may take man's moral nature as it is ; more or less defective or deformed in every part, yet containing in the savage or in the criminal, as in the infant, a latent capacity of individual purification, renewal, and progress towards Divine perfection. Declining arbitrary and fanciful hypotheses, we may take our stand on the firm ground of ascertained experience.

If these positions be conceded, we may infer, thirdly, that if the Creator be infinitely wise and benevolent, He must design and desire the happiness of mankind, and of every human being, not in disobedience, but in obedience, to the law of Duty and Love ; not in disregard,

but in fulfilment, of the Type which is the reason of that Law.

Fourthly, if we are honestly desirous to see what light Theism is able to shed upon the dark Enigma of Life, we must allow that Christian Theism rightly represents the moral law as summed up in obedient love to God (conceived as perfectly wise, just, truthful, patient, holy, and loving, caring for and overseeing all human affairs), and in unselfish love to men ; and further, that it rightly represents the true type of virtue as consisting in moral resemblance to God. Every day's experience incontrovertibly proves, that if every human being were to become thus unvaryingly pure, honest, truthful, unselfishly loving to men, and intelligently obedient to God, the huge dark mass of human unhappiness would vanish, leaving suffering only as we see it among the lower animals,—an unavoidable friction in the working of machinery broadly beneficent ; a light quit-rent for a rich inheritance of happiness. Experience is entirely at one with the Bible theory,—that sin is the source of human misery, and that the misery can be effectually dealt with only by dealing with the sin.

The difficulty is thus driven back a step ; it is shifted from suffering to sin. It reappears in the question which the little child spontaneously asks, but which the Christian sage ponders in silent awe,—“ *Why does God permit sin ?* Can He not prevent it ? If so, where is his power ? If He can, but does not, where is his goodness ? ” But what, exactly, does this question mean ? Often as it has been asked, it is ambiguous, and may therefore owe much of its perplexing power to being unintelligible. Does it refer to human nature as a whole, or to human beings individually ? Does



it suggest that God might have made man incapable of sin ; or, that in some way or other He might prevent each man from sinning? These are vitally different and mutually exclusive suppositions. Doubtless God might have created a being resembling man in bodily organisation and in many of his faculties and sensibilities, a noble, beautiful, richly-endowed animal, as incapable of sin as a bird or a butterfly. But incapable of sin, only because incapable of virtue and holiness. Such a creature would not be Man. The noblest capacity of humanity would be lacking—the capacity to obey moral law. Moral law would for him have no existence. Capacity to obey means capacity to disobey. Virtue, moreover, in a human soul means habit ; and habit means growth ; and growth in virtuous habit is inconceivable apart from a discipline of conflict and temptation. Obedience is tested by allurements to disobedience. Patience, hope, courage, fortitude, humility, self-government, are toughened and ripened by adversity. Love is perfected by self-sacrifice. The idea that God might have secured man's highest welfare by creating him incapable of sin, is found therefore upon analysis to be self-contradictory.

The alternative supposition remains. Could not God from the beginning have exerted upon every human being a power which should have preserved him, though capable of sinning, from actual sin ; or, if he failed, have brought him to speedy repentance, and rendered him the wiser for his error and the stronger for his fall? No Christian Theist can deny this supposition to be reasonable ; for it belongs to the very essence of Christianity that in the case of vast numbers, including some who have sinned much and fallen low,

by that control over circumstances which Christians name 'providence,' and that influence on individual minds which they name 'grace,' joined with the proper action of truth on the heart, conscience, and intellect, God does restore the erring to obedience, and preserve the obedient in rectitude. If, through the deep experience of love, gratitude, fear, hope, temptation resisted, suffering patiently borne, self nobly conquered, a grander, richer, more divine ideal be developed in the individual, and ultimately in the race, than was possible to mere untried innocence; it will then be manifest that as the possibility of sin was a condition of man's perfection, so the non-prevention of sin was an exercise of God's infinite wisdom and perfect goodness.

If it be said that this reply to the Difficulty is hypothetical only, I answer that a hypothetical reply is all that we need, because an objection *proves nothing*, and loses its force as soon as it is shown capable of being answered. If our limited minds can conceive a satisfactory solution, much more must infinite wisdom, power, and goodness be able to furnish one.

The Difficulty is therefore shown to lie, not in the original constitution of things, or in the general laws of Divine procedure, but in the dealing of the Creator with each human being personally. Of this residuary difficulty I do not presume to offer a solution. I do not believe that, with our present knowledge, we can arrive at one. It is capable of being so rhetorically and one-sidedly stated as to seem crushing. It would be instructive, but aside from our business, to inquire how far this difficulty has been aggravated and entangled by the baseless dogmatism or unbridled speculation of theologians on the one hand, and anti-theologians on the

other. It is, for example, a baseless assumption when the poverty and ignorance of large masses of mankind, *apart from the moral forces of evil example and association*, are regarded as causes necessarily dooming them to moral failure. It is an equally baseless assumption that the progress of science, or of intellectual knowledge in any form, will avail to restrain human passions or to enlist human wills on the side of justice and benevolence. Moral conduct depends as surely on moral forces as physical motion on physical forces. Without attempting to enter the wide field thus opened, I do venture earnestly to urge upon any one whose attitude is that of candid and reluctant scepticism, that it is no unreasonable or extravagant exercise of faith to believe that 'the Judge of all the earth' will 'do right,' not only on the broad scale, but in every particular case; and that as no fault can be detected in the universal laws under which human nature is framed and placed, so when the life of men upon earth comes to be seen in its eternal issues, no failure of goodness, justice, or wisdom will be disclosed in God's dealing with the many or with the few, or with any single member of the human family. Is it too much to believe that we are not as yet competent judges of the details or even principles of that Divine administration which embraces all worlds and whose foresight comprehends Eternity?

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CONCLUSION.

My task has been discharged, not as its magnitude deserved, but as my ability and limits permitted. There are three classes of mind impervious to argument: those who make their own opinions the standard of truth;

those who do not believe in the possibility of attaining truth ; and those who do not desire truth. I cannot hope that what has been advanced in these Lectures will produce any sensible effect on the self-complacent atheism which, mistaking intellect for the sole organ of truth, and the sceptic's own intellect for that of the human race, is satisfied that Theism is a superstition which the race has outgrown ; upon the frigid atheism of the Agnostic, who turns the convex side of his mind to all positive evidence, and the concave to doubt, difficulty, and negation ; upon the careless atheism of minds insensible to the magnetism of truth, which recoil from all that is not of the earth earthy. Doubt which has its tap-root in the doubter's own personality can no more be uprooted by argument than the shrinking force of cold can be countervailed by mechanical pressure.

But to those whose 'open eyes desire the truth ;' whose attitude towards that which, if truth at all, must needs be the master-truth of all knowledge, the foundation-truth of all life, is not scorn, indifference, or aversion, but reverent, hopeful inquiry ; yet who are resolute to believe nothing but what is true, and with faith proportioned to evidence, my hope is, that this survey of the grounds of Christian Theism may, through that light from above in which alone we can see God, bring calm conviction that the Basis of Faith is neither cloud nor quicksand, but solid rock. Such, I hope, will find themselves able to look doubt fearlessly in the face, and say—  
"Man's nature is not a lie. Man is not the orphan heir of the Universe. His deepest need and sublimest instinct is not a fond vain yearning after an Idol of Imagination,—a colossal reflection of himself in the infinite void. The uncounted millions of human spirits are

not fatherless, nor is human life an eternal drifting no-whence, no-whither, without chart or harbour, sun or star. The Universe is not a riddle without answer, a language without meaning, a soulless dance of atoms, a dream-mist overhanging the abyss of the Unknowable. It is a glorious semitransparent veil, half hiding, half revealing the face of the Maker, the Ruler, the Father. GOD IS, and has revealed Himself to man. Knowledge of Him is the crown of all knowledge; His love the supreme good; our relation to Him the key to human life, here and hereafter."

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OF HIM  
AND THROUGH HIM  
AND TO HIM  
ARE ALL THINGS  
TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER

A M E N



APPENDIX.





## APPENDIX.

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### NOTE A. (LECTURE I.)

*On the bearing of Buddhism on the Theory of Religion; and its resemblance to modern proposed substitutes for Theism.*

BUDDHISM offers the most colossal example of an atheistic religion and the most formidable objection, therefore, to our defining Religion as "a sense of God." "As it stands depicted in the oldest class of monuments, we need not hesitate to affirm that no single trace survives in it of a supreme Being." (*Hardwick.*) Originally, Buddhism was an ethical philosophy and a social revolution; not, properly speaking, a religion. It was a mighty revolt, in the name of human nature, against the religious and social tyranny of Brahmanism. It is an attempt, like that of Positivism, to provide a theory and code of morals, and a way of salvation, based on the denial of a Supreme Cause and Ruler of the universe. (See HARDWICK'S *Christ and Other Masters*, pp. 153-169, fourth edition. See also the articles "Buddhism" and "Brahmanism" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition.) It unites the two incongruous beliefs of an eternal succession of causes and effects and a final extinction of consciousness and being. Owing its origin to a keen sense of the immensity and hopelessness of human misery, and regarding sin and suffering as inseparable accidents of existence, the goal of promise it holds out is annihilation. It is (as Mr. Hardwick well calls it) "the philosophy of despair." The resemblance of its ethics to those of Christianity is striking and even startling; but it is merely superficial. Nothing can be wider apart than the principles of the two systems. The starting-point of Buddhist ethics is EVIL; its idea of salvation is the deliverance of the soul from evil; and since evil is inseparable from existence, this deliverance can be ultimately perfected only by extinction. The starting-point of Christian ethics is GOOD, issuing from Divine love as its fountain; the salvation it contemplates consists in the positive victory of goodness in souls which are brought under the power of that love; and its goal, eternal life

in God. Buddhist morality therefore, like Positivist 'altruism,' is void of sanction. "The Buddhist's principle of action was 'I must;' he could not say, 'I ought.'" (*Hardwick*.) Buddhism, then, so far as the millions of its votaries have been really satisfied with its teaching, must be taken, like the savage atheism of some African nations and the polished atheism of Positivism, as a drawback or discount on the strength of the religious tendency in human nature. But, on the other hand, just as Positivism, by its fantastic apparatus of church, priesthood, sacraments, and ritual, and the peevish resentfulness manifested when its right is questioned to wear the dress and use the language of Religion, bears witness to the necessity and difficulty of filling up the immense void it has made; so the history of Buddhism, in its assumption of religious forms, in its alliance with various systems of heathenism, in the tendency to deify Gautama himself, and in those modifications of his doctrine which have even transformed *Nirvāna* into Paradise, bears witness to the strength of those very instincts and yearnings of human nature which as a system it ignores.

Buddhism may be considered, on the whole, the most astounding fact in the spiritual history of mankind. Starting with the denial of God, it nevertheless bears witness in its history to the power of the religious element in human nature. But at the same time it is a standing warning against exaggerating the value of the argument for the existence of God from the supposed universal consent of mankind, and a standing witness to the need of a Divine Revelation in order to any certain and universal belief in the fundamental doctrine of Religion.

#### NOTE B. (LECTURE I.)

*On the possibility of discovering in "the Essence of Religion" a Universal Religion.*

ONE of the ablest, most eloquent, and dreamiest expositions of what may be styled the dreamy or vague school of religious thought is furnished in Mr. PICTON'S volume of essays entitled (from the first essay) *The Mystery of Matter*. The position assumed, and defended with great rhetorical power, is, that "no definition of Religion can be satisfactory unless it surrenders all distinction between essential and non-essential dogmas; unless, in fact, it is capable of embracing within its scope every conceivable opinion that can by any possibility be conscientiously held." "A universal religion cannot make

any creed whatever binding upon us, except that which it does not create, but finds involved in, yet needing evolution for the constitution of the human mind.”<sup>1</sup> Religious faith, Mr. Picton has previously defined as “steadfast obedience to certain special forms of predisposition which are involved in the adaptation of matured humanity to the outward universe, or ‘complement of the Ego.’” “The vital essence of faith, though like every mental and moral affection impossible of realisation in abstract simplicity, lies not in any form of opinion which may clothe it, but in the energy of a voluntary devotion to the best ideal known.”<sup>2</sup> The essence of Religion he explains to be “an endeavour after a practical expression of man’s conscious relation to the Infinite;” or “the impulse to interpret that relationship as involving humility, submission, aspiration, and loyalty to the recognised laws of a Power that is altogether beyond self-will.”<sup>3</sup>

In the views summarised in these passages it will be seen that the distinction is lost sight of between Religion and A Religion. This confusion is analogous to the mistake of supposing that because Water is chemically defined as H<sub>2</sub>O, therefore any number of atoms of oxygen mixed with double that number of atoms of hydrogen will quench thirst. The elements must not merely exist, but must be chemically combined and mechanically condensed before one drop of water will touch the parched lip. When we speak of the essence or essential nature of a thing, we speak of an idea, not a reality. We describe certain elements or characters which must be present wherever the Thing exists: but it by no means follows that these elements are capable of separate existence, or ever found pure from admixture with other elements. If Religion be “a practical expression of our relations to the Infinite,” or “loyalty” to these relations, it can have no existence apart from some belief, right or wrong, clear or obscure, as to what those relations really are. A religion—Christianity, for example—must define those relations. It is the *sine quâ non* of its existence. The answer, therefore, which it gives to the question whether those relations are or are not such as to imply that God is in this sense a PERSON,—namely, that we can and ought to sustain towards Him personal relations of obedience, love, trust, and duty,—must needs be an “essential dogma” either of Christianity or of any other actual religion. Religion in the abstract has no “essential dogma;” but, then, Religion in the abstract can have no real existence.

This reference seemed due to Mr. PICTON’S volume, because it

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 213, 210.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 159, 167.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 283-9.

exhibits unquestionable intellectual power, as well as uncommon rhetorical skill and fascination. But it is a power like that of *aqua regia*: a faculty for dissolving the minted gold of Truth so that it will run fluent into any mould, and gild with a film of true-seeming the most shapeless paradoxes.

#### NOTE C. (LECTURE II.)

##### *On Sir W. Hamilton's theory of the Idea of Cause.*

IT may be deemed a failure in the respect due to so great an authority, if I pass over in silence Sir W. HAMILTON'S theory of our belief in the necessity of causation (or the necessity of our belief in causation) as not involving any direct intuition, or primary belief of reason, but being simply a particular case of the *impotence of reason*. —*Discussions*, p. 614.

Metaphysical theories are subject to two ultimate tests: accurate introspection, and close observation of the minds of children. Hamilton's theory, if I understand it, fails to stand these tests, so far as I am able to apply them. I can neither recognise in it the working of my own mind, nor reconcile it with the early instinctive operations of the mind as disclosed by the spontaneous questions of children. A child's mind is much feebler than a man's; but it is not this feebleness which supplies him with his notion of causation. He sees a blot on his paper; he spins his top, or asks somebody to spin it for him; he hears thunder; and he asks,—“What *made* this blot?” “What makes the top spin; and why does it leave off spinning and tumble down?” “What makes that loud noise?” Surely it is an utterly artificial and unreal explanation of the child's mental process to say that, “compelled to think, but unable positively to think an absolute commencement,” his “impotence to this drives” him “backwards on the notion of *Cause*; unable positively to think an absolute termination,” his “impotence to this drives” him “forwards on the notion of *Effect*.” This importation of the element of time appears to me to darken and confuse the question. The child's mind is not concerned at all with *time*, as to either commencement or termination. It is occupied with a wholly different idea—that of *Force*, or *Power*, adequate (he does not care to ask *how*) to produce what he sees and hears. He has never heard the word “phenomenon,” and would not know what you mean by “effect;” but he intuitively looks through the phenomena, and divines behind them an unknown but real power,

but for which they could not be. Probably he would be satisfied if you told him that the blot “*came of itself;*” and the thunder “*made itself;*” for his active imagination would supply in each case an obscure *something* able to make itself visible or audible. Certainly, if you told him that the top left off spinning and tumbled down “*of itself;*” this would appear to him perfectly reasonable. He would be troubled with no incapacity ‘to think an absolute termination.’ Indeed, it formerly appeared self-evident to the whole world that motion naturally dies out and comes to an ‘absolute termination.’ The discovery of what became known as ‘the first law of motion,’ was one of the early beams of the sunrise of modern science. Motion still appeared destructible in the case of a body not free to move, until the brilliant discovery of the conversion of motive force into an equivalent amount of heating force, and of the identity of heat with molecular motion, solved the paradox. These ideas, with the wider generalisation of the persistence of force and the conservation of energy, are due neither to any intuition nor to any impotence of reason, but to clear steady reasoning on ascertained facts.

If my introspection and observation are erroneous, Hamilton’s theory may be true. If they are correct, no authority of a great name, or requirement of a philosophical system, can outweigh facts.

#### NOTE D. (LECTURE V.)

##### *On certain Objections to the Argument from Design.*

I. MR. J. S. MILL, in the volume of Essays published after his decease, has ventured on the startling, and I must add thoughtless, assertion that “it is not too much to say that every indication of Design in the kosmos is so much evidence against the omnipotence of the Designer. For what is meant by Design? Contrivance: the adaptation of means to an end.” This, he argues, implies limitation of power, since omnipotence could attain ends without the intervention of means. It is difficult to believe this argument sincere. For it must follow, that omnipotence is inconsistent with wisdom, or at least with the only intelligible exercise or possible evidence of wisdom. For wisdom is seen in the choice of ends and in the manner in which those ends are secured. Omnipotence means power equal to the achievement of every possible result. Of what sort, then, are *those ends which imply no means;* those results which omnipotence could secure by pure exercise of

will, apart from means? Suppose God created spirits to whom He revealed Himself by direct intuition. Not to say that their faculty of intuition would itself be a means to an end, these creatures must remain useless and unknown to one another. They must be passive recipients of Divine knowledge and emotion, devoid of reason and will; for both reasoning and volition imply adaptation of means to ends. Nay, even so, the very putting forth of Divine power would be the means by which the proposed end — suppose the happiness of these creatures — is secured. Logically followed out, Mr. Mill's assertion would prove not only the impossibility of Infinite Power producing a universe of acting and reacting forces and sentient beings, knowing, loving, and influencing one another, but that an Omnipotent Being must be aimless.

Though I could not help calling this a thoughtless assertion, yet it is boldly and skilfully reproduced in Mr. PICTON'S certainly very thoughtful Essay, *Christian Pantheism*. Speaking of the analogy between human and Divine workmanship, he asserts that "however the changes may be played upon the application of the analogy, we can never, without altogether surrendering it, neutralise its essential significance, which is, that design implies purpose only because it implies triumph over difficulties by ingenuity; while the idea of difficulty is entirely inconsistent with that of omnipotence or unconditioned power" (p. 334). Here is, *first* of all, a confusion between power and wisdom; for 'the triumph of ingenuity over difficulties' is the triumph, not of power but of skill—wealth of resource and wisdom in selecting the most simple and effectual means. *Secondly*, here is the common and fallacious mode of rebutting an argument from analogy by fixing on some point in which the analogy necessarily fails, as if this were its vital point, and then, having refuted what no one maintains, treating the analogy as discredited. Design implies purpose, not because it triumphs over difficulties, but because it is the embodiment of a thought — a realised conception. What is here taken as "the essential significance" of the analogy, is, in fact, only (what logicians term) an inseparable accident. *Thirdly*, the great underlying fallacy of Mr. Picton's argument, as of Mr. Mill's, is, that it ignores the fact that while the human worker works under conditions prescribed for him, in the setting up of which he had no voice, the Divine Worker works under conditions instituted by Himself. But conditions, none the less. The phrase '*unconditioned power*' is meaningless, unless we mean power at rest, not in action. Omnipotence, the moment it goes forth in act, creates conditions for its future exercise. It is,

moreover, in its every act 'conditioned' by wisdom and goodness. There is therefore no contradiction in speaking of 'difficulty' even in regard to God's works, when it is remembered, that not bare power is concerned, but power acting according to wisdom for the ends of goodness.

II. Objections against the Argument from Design have been raised on the assumption that, if sound, it will compel us to conclude that the Creator is not possessed of perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. Nature, it is argued, as we see it in this world, is in many respects imperfect; and imperfection in the work argues imperfection in the worker, either as to his design or as to his power to carry it out. Some of the facts on which this objection is based are stated with great force and clearness in Mr. MURPHY'S *Scientific Bases of Faith* (chapter xvi.); his purpose being, "not to find fault with the arrangements of the universe, but to show that the purpose of these arrangements, whatever it may be, is something else than the greatest amount of comfort to man" (p. 240).

The false assumption involved in this line of objection is, that we are in possession of a standard of perfection which we are competent to apply to our Creator's work. Perfection is of two kinds: faultless adaptation to a definite purpose, and ideal completeness. A watch is perfect when it keeps time with unerring truth. A statue is perfect when nothing can be added to it to increase its beauty and expressiveness, and nothing taken from it without injury. 'Imperfection' is therefore a relative term, void of meaning unless we know either the purpose the work is meant to serve, or the idea it is meant to realise.

How easy it is to overstrain this sort of criticism on the universe Mr. Murphy has shown when, in support of the position that "Nature ministers less effectually than it might do to the sense of beauty in man," and that beauty "has no appearance of being distributed with any special design," he instances that "perhaps the most magnificent scene in the world has been beheld by human eyes but once; namely, Mounts Erebus and Terror in the Antarctic continent." Both the material conditions and the moral or educational value of great natural beauty on a large scale require that it should be rare. Mountain ranges are necessary to its finer and grander forms; and these involve the interruption of agriculture, intercourse, and population. It is not easy to see how the spectacle of two mountains as high as Etna, "clothed with snow from base to summit, except where black volcanic rocks break through,"

rising from the silent loneliness of a polar sea, could have been brought within reach of a Cook's excursion. The mere forms and colours might be imitated by a scene painter ; but the sense of awe and sublimity inspired by the terrible climate, the desolate solitude, the awful remoteness from all human habitation, help, and sympathy, the virgin dignity of those snowy slopes and summits, on which no eye had ever before rested and which no human footprint will ever sully ;—all this is essential to the impression which makes such a scene, when once discovered and described, a glorious addition to the imaginative treasures of mankind. As for those beauties accessible to ordinary travellers, and by means of painting (or photography) furnishing an inexhaustible fount of pure delight wherever cultivated minds are found, it is hard to see how they could have been better distributed than they actually are. Take, for example, the Alps and the Pyrenees, which, while discharging their office of schools and galleries of beauty, serve the most important physical purposes as the cradles of rivers and regulators of climate ; and at the same time have been among the most powerful influences in the political and military history of the leading nations of the world.

Again, those alterations of the earth's surface by which Mr. Murphy supposes climate might be ameliorated, and our globe fitted to support in comfort a much larger population,—as, the sinking of Greenland (cutting off the source of Atlantic icebergs), the inundating of a large portion of North Africa, and the elevation of a new continent in the Pacific, would create changes in the currents of the ocean and the atmosphere, the influence of which on vegetable and animal life it is impossible for us to conjecture. Even were these imagined improvements weighted with no physical drawbacks, the removal of those barriers of ice which surround the Arctic pole with an inaccessible desert, and of the fickleness, gloom, and wholesome severity of climate belonging to our own and other northern lands, might fatally derange the adaptation of the Globe to moral ends, and to the discipline and history of nations. The children of the Norse Vikings should be the last to forget that it is not in regions of evergreen summer and untoiled-for plenty that the strongest and hardiest men, the keenest intelligence, the most intense love of nature, and the loftiest moral character, have been nurtured.



## NOTE E. (LECTURE VI.)

*On the hypothesis of Unconscious Intelligence.*

MR. MURPHY, in his wonderfully thoughtful and able book, *Scientific Bases of Faith*, has advanced the notion that the "Organising Intelligence is not Divine, but is fundamentally identical with mental and instinctive intelligence. . . . The intelligence which becomes conscious in the brain of man and the higher animals is fundamentally identical with the unconscious intelligence which guides the formation of the organism." (P. 215.) 'Unconscious intelligence' appears to me as unmeaning a phrase as 'a vacuum filled with air.' For what is the intelligence in question? It is *intelligent purpose*; intelligence working to an end, and realising a foreseen object by means whose subtil material, boundless fertility of resource, accuracy of adaptation, and delicacy of finish, leave the finest human workmanship immeasurably behind. Compared with the power at work in building up a primrose from the seed, or a humming-bird from the egg, the process of Reason in generalising many propositions into one, or syllogising from general premises, might almost be termed mechanical. 'Unconscious purpose' is as blank an absurdity, as direct a contradiction in terms, as 'unconscious induction' or 'unconscious ratiocination.' It may be replied, and truly, that there is a sense in which reasoning, as well as volition, may be, and often is, unconscious. We leap to a conclusion without knowing what were the steps which led to it, just as persons endowed with an extraordinary faculty for arithmetic can give a sum, product, or quotient, involving an intricate calculation, without being able to explain the process by which they reached it; as a rapid reader can take in a page at a glance, without any distinct consciousness of looking at every word, still less at every letter; as an expert pianist will play through a difficult piece at sight, the fingers moving too rapidly for the eye to follow them; or, as we arrive at the end of a long walk through the streets, absorbed in a train of thought, with no remembrance of the various turnings and crossings by the way, the vehicles and passers-by we avoided, still less the separate acts of will by which step after step was impelled. Yet in this last case, had a bit of orange peel lain on the pavement, we should have stepped aside, or perhaps kicked it away for the benefit of other people, and the

face of a friend among the crowd (if our reverie were not too profound) would have brought us to a standstill in a moment. In these and innumerable similar cases it is the fashion of a certain school to talk of "unconscious cerebration," as though the brain, like a calculating machine, could work through a series of movements as unmeaning as algebraic symbols (unmeaning until their value is assigned), and bring out the result with mechanical correctness. This is one of those theories which seek to explain a mystery by substituting another incomparably greater, not only unintelligible but unmeaning. Puzzling as such cases appear, their real explanation, I cannot doubt, is, that the rapidity with which the mind acts is such as to baffle the inward eye of attention and leave no trace on the memory; just as a bullet passing before the eye is invisible, although its image must have fallen on the retina. This is capable of proof in such a case as that of the musician, who may play the piece at first so slowly that the meaning of every musical character, and the touch of every finger, are matter of distinct though evanescent consciousness; gradually increasing the speed of his performance, until neither the spectator's eye can follow it, nor the performer's own memory retain any trace of it. In all these cases, therefore, it is not consciousness in the strict sense, but memory (which alone gives permanence to consciousness) that is wanting. We may if we please term this 'unconscious mental action,' but if so, it is the *unconsciousness of a conscious being*, which gives no shadow of countenance to the hypothesis of *unconscious intelligence apart from any conscious being*. In like manner, the rate of many natural processes utterly outstrips not only our senses but our fancy; yet we can suppose that there are intelligences to whom the vibrations of sound, heat, and light are matter of accurate perception, perhaps of voluntary control.

NOTE F. (LECTURE VII.)

*On Mr. Spencer's First Principles.*

MR. HERBERT SPENCER, in that remarkable volume in which he has undertaken to elaborate the hypothesis of evolution into a universal philosophy (and in which we may well allow that if intellectual labour could have achieved this impossible task, he would have shown himself worthy to achieve it), glides with the skill of a practised skater on weak ice over those chasms in his reasoning

which his scheme covers with a thin surface of logic that will not bear a firm tread. He seems to overlook the fact that 'the multiplication of effects' from any single cause always involves at every step the combination of many causes in the production of each single effect. In like manner he passes lightly over the central fact, that for the most complex of all effects, namely, the development of the amazingly various forms of organic life, each true to its own permanent type, from indistinguishable germs, and their constant building up amid incessant decay from one single kind of matter, one unvarying *protoplasm* or *bioplasm*, we can assign absolutely no cause at all . . . except THE ONE CAUSE. These omissions appear to me to be not surface cracks, but chasms that rive the very foundations of Mr. Spencer's philosophy, and are fatal to its pretensions. This distinguished thinker hunts truth with a keen scent, but only on one track. This is the right course in science, which starts from individual facts, and knows but two forms of truth, analysis and generalisation—of which physical law is the highest form. But it is not the right course in philosophy, which deals not with individual facts, but with truth in its harmony and manifoldness, and seeks not laws, but the reason and meaning of laws.

The chief feature in every philosophy is its method. Mr. Spencer's favourite method is one which renders his argument brilliant and entertaining reading, but at the expense of the validity of his conclusions. A few examples, presenting vivid traits, are selected and described with masterly clearness, often with striking beauty. A vague idea is suggested to the reader's mind that these are but samples of an innumerable multitude of corresponding cases. Contrary cases, or features in the selected cases at variance with the principle sought to be established, are calmly ignored; and a wide generalisation is drawn, in which what may perhaps be merely a striking feature in each example passes for sole cause or philosophic interpretation. This kind of reasoning neither marches nor soars: it progresses kangaroo-wise—by wide leaps, and, provided it can find a firm smooth spot to alight on, takes small account of what the intervening spaces may contain. Hence this volume is strongly pervaded, as it seems to me, with the influence of that error on which Dr. Thomas Brown based a large part of his philosophy, the error of mistaking generalisation for analysis. The substitution of *process* for *cause* is one stupendous example. And the final statement of the Theory of Evolution, to which Mr. Spencer conducts his readers as the crowning summit of Philosophy,—its

highest achievement in the work of unifying knowledge,—is nothing but a wide verbal generalisation, containing no idea, explaining no mystery, and supplying no fruitful principle from which to reason.

The plain fact is, that if from the actual process of evolution or development in the universe you eliminate the Creative Idea, the only thing which could possibly contain wrapped up within itself all these various results and intricate harmonies, and out of which alone therefore they can have been evolved, it is no longer possible from the phenomena of Nature to supply the void, or to construct any theory of their origin and meaning.

#### NOTE G. (LECTURE VII.)

##### *On Modern Scepticism regarding Miracles.*

THAT violent and unreasonable repugnance to the idea of the supernatural or miraculous which so strongly characterises the spirit of our time, and in which it is so widely at variance with the common sentiment of mankind and with the records of past experience, is the natural though not logical result of the intense study bestowed for two generations on those classes of fact which are comprehended under rigid universal laws, and of the splendid harvest of science with which this study has been repaid. M. VACHEROT is the mouthpiece of this spirit when he asserts that “en constatant l'existence de toutes les grandes lois qui régissent le monde entier, les sciences de la nature, la mécanique, la physique, la chimie, la biologie, on a banni du domaine de la philosophie la doctrine du surnaturel.”—(*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1876.) It would be as reasonable to say that natural science has banished from the domain of philosophy human volition; that chemistry, for example, has proved the impossibility of inventing a new dye, and that mechanics forbids the idea that an engine can be reversed at the word of command. Those scientific deniers of the supernatural or miraculous are indeed consistent—and they alone—who push their denial to its legitimate conclusion, and maintain that men are automata; volition, like muscular contraction, simply a mode of that force which, under all its Protean transformations, lives in atoms and in ether; and free-will an incurable illusion.

Mr. MILL, in his *Essays*, admits the analogy between miracles and voluntary human action. But he endeavours to destroy the force of this admission by saying that, in this case, “all the physical

phenomena, except the first bodily movement, are produced in strict conformity to physical causation; while that first movement is traced by positive observation to the cause (the volition) which produced it. In the other case the event is supposed not to be produced through physical causation, while there is no direct evidence to connect it with any volition." The only evidence, he contends, is negative—our inability to assign any other cause. But is this contrast just? We are *conscious* of volition; we *perceive* its results in the motion of our limbs, of which also we are conscious; but we have no consciousness of any intervening link. We seem to ourselves to exercise our will *in* the limb that moves. Of cerebral and nervous action, or of the existence of any brain and nerves, we are totally unconscious. We dissect. We find nerves in the bodies of other people, and infer their existence in our own. We observe the movements of our fellows, and intuitively infer their volitions, of which we have no direct knowledge. The analogy seems flawless, and the reasoning equally direct, when from movements transcending all human power we intuitively infer the presence of a super-human Will.

With reference to miracles said to have been wrought upon the express volition of a human agent (including those of JESUS), Mr. Mill contends that "it is always possible that there may be at work some undetected law of nature, which the wonder-worker may have acquired, consciously or unconsciously, the power of calling into action" (*Theism*, p. 230). *Is* it always possible? Does this sort of abstract generalisation, without any attempt to deal with actual cases, serve any better end than that of throwing a thin veil of scientific candour and acumen over the fixed resolve not to accept miracles on any testimony? This determination is further evident in the strenuous effort not to weigh fairly but to pare down to nothing the credit of the witnesses for miracles. "Recorded miracles are, in the first place, such as it would have been extremely difficult to verify as matters of fact; and in the next place are hardly ever beyond the possibility of having been brought about by the spontaneous agencies of nature" (p. 219). The testimony of the Apostles and their companions is characterised as "the uncross-examined testimony of extremely ignorant people, credulous as such usually are." "St. Paul [is] the one known exception to the ignorance and want of education of the first generation of Christians" (pp. 226, 239). "Uncross-examined!"—when it was matter of life and death to the Jewish Sanhedrin to discredit the witness of these men, whom (unless it be true that they were now

and then miraculously released) they had absolutely in their power. Peter, John, and Matthew were doubtless "unlearned and ignorant men," tried by the Rabbinical standard. But if ignorance and want of education imply the absence of sound sense, intellectual force, and disciplined thought, the writings of these men render such an imputation ridiculous. Instead of being credulous, the evidence is that they were incredulous almost to obstinacy. The miracles they record, they declare to have been performed during three years, in public and in private, under keen hostile supervision, in hundreds of cases, before thousands of witnesses, *without a single instance of failure* (or a single refusal, except when useless miracles were demanded). How far it is true that they would have been difficult to verify as matters of fact, or that they could be brought about by the spontaneous agencies of nature, or by undetected laws of which the wonder-worker had acquired command, let every one judge for himself. The cure of leprosy, *e.g.*; of congenital lameness or blindness; of fever; the feeding of thousands of hungry people on an open mountain side; the raising from the dead, after four days' burial, of a man known to the Jewish authorities and to a large circle of private friends, in a village within a few minutes' walk of the metropolis; the resurrection of Jesus Himself. Mr. Mill's remark, that "St. Paul attests no miracle but that of his own conversion," is an astonishing assertion, showing how little study even so able a man is willing to bestow on what he does not wish to believe. (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10; xv. 4; 2 Cor. xii. 12; Rom. xv. 18, 19; Gal. iii. 5. Compare Acts xix. 11, 12.)

The circle in which HUME'S argument smoothly revolves is narrow enough. Miracles are impossible and incredible because contradicted by universal experience; *q.d.*, by the sum total of trustworthy testimony; and all testimony to miracles is untrustworthy because miracles are impossible. Miracles have never happened because they are incredible, and they are incredible because they have never happened. The supplementary argument with which Hume seeks further to prove the worthlessness of all testimony to miraculous events is of still flimsier texture. It rests on the credulousness of the majority of mankind with reference to marvellous events; in other words, on the weakness of the average human intellect. Briefly stated it amounts to this: Many strongly attested miracles are allowed to have been delusions or impostures; therefore, all miracles, however strongly attested, are delusions or impostures. This argument, essentially illogical though it be, is capable of being

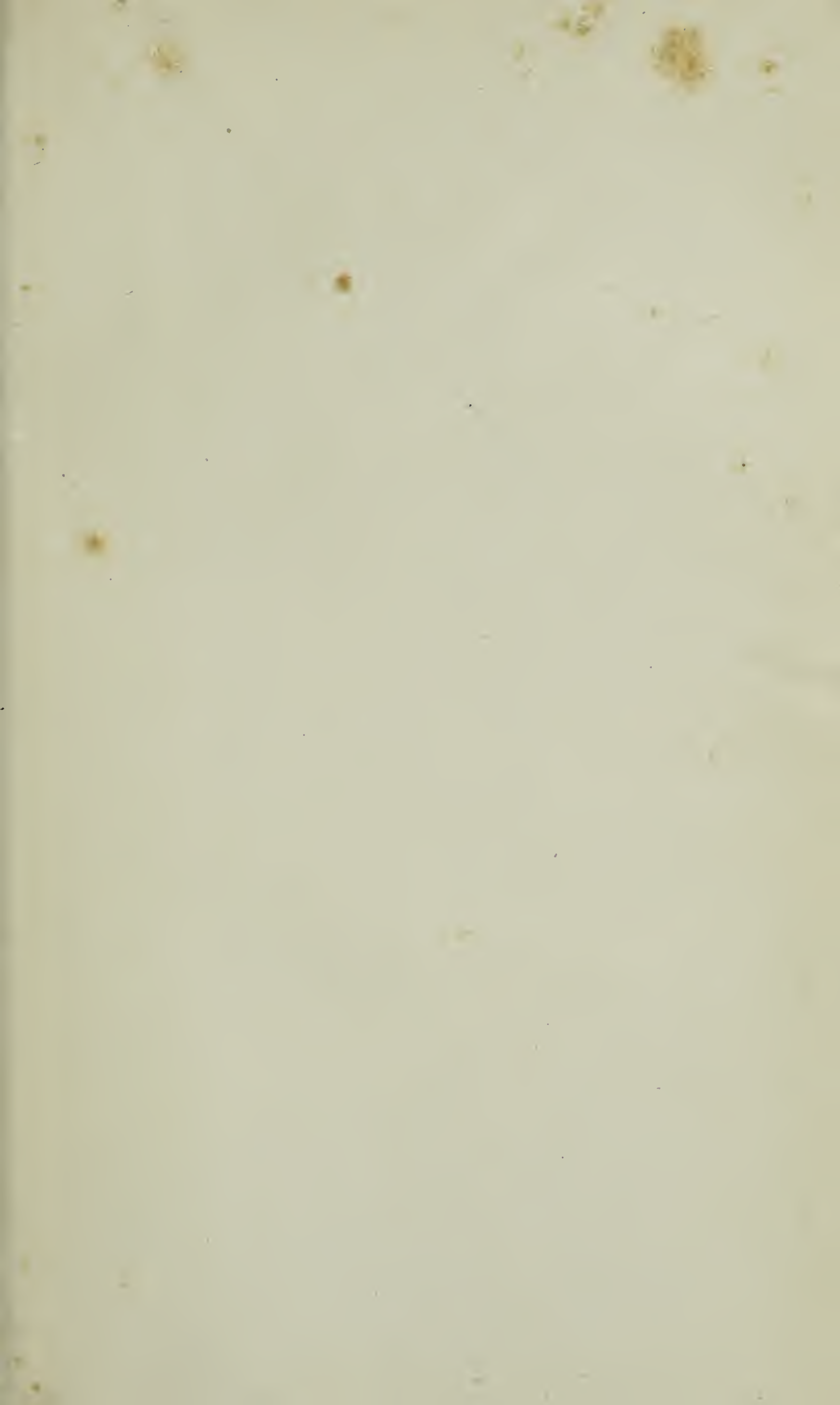
stated with telling force and illustrated with astounding examples. It has recently been taken up afresh, and urged with great appearance of scientific rigour. But it proves too much. It goes to destroy the credit of human testimony in general. It is not only in reference to miracles that witnesses tell lies, or honest enthusiasts deceive themselves. On this showing, probable events, or events in which nobody has any strong interest, must be the only kind of events of whose occurrence we can ever be sure. The first question for a jury should be, not whether the witnesses are competent and honest, but whether what they state is probable, according to whatever standard of probability each particular set of jurymen is pleased to set up. And in point of fact, if a jury, how honest soever, were as determined beforehand on their verdict as the writers against miracles are determined not to accept any miraculous narrative, no amount of evidence would convince them. If this foregone determination to discredit all evidence in favour of a certain class of facts were peculiar to minds preoccupied and absorbed with scientific ideas, we might be tempted to attribute it to the one-sided influence of scientific study. But when we find it also in metaphysicians, lawyers, and men of letters, we must seek for causes deeper in human nature.

#### NOTE H. (LECTURE IX.)

DUTY and RIGHT are reciprocal : each involves the other. My duties toward you are your rights over me ; your duties toward me, my rights over you. The duties I owe to myself (the duty or right of self-defence, *e.g.*) are rights which I claim from myself. What a man OUGHT to do is what he *owes*—to another or to himself. Duty is thus ever a personal claim—a Voice that says, “*Pay me that thou owest.*” Does Duty, then, originate Right, or Right Duty? Neither alternative can be intelligibly maintained. Is it possible to account for this mutual dependence and transformation, except by the supposition of an Original Supreme Authority, from whom all human rights and duties draw their power and sanction? I think not. And, from the nature of the case, such Authority must be Personal.



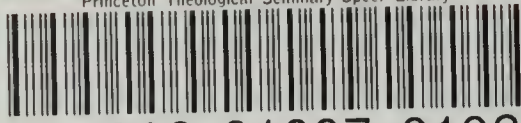








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